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SHELLEY:

THE MAN AND THE POET.

BY

FELIX RABBE.

CHICAGO:

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY.

1888.



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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

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TO MADAME E. DE C——.

IN the name of our old friendship I venture to dedicate to you this Monograph on Shelley, as to one whom the poet himself would have loved, and whom he would have recognised as one of those souls which are sisters through their love of the True and the Beautiful; members of

“All that band of sister spirits known
To one another by a voiceless tone.”

F. RABBE.

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SHELLEY:

THE MAN AND THE POET.

INTRODUCTION.

BYRON, conversing with Shelley in literary mood, admitted frankly that until that time he had written for women readers only, but that when he should have reached the age of forty he intended to change his tactics, and to show mankind what he was capable of doing. Shelley replied: "Do it at once; write nothing but with conviction of its truth. You should teach the wise, not learn from the foolish. Time will reverse the verdict of the crowd. Contemporary criticism merely represents the amount of ignorance that must be encountered by genius."

Time has proved Shelley to be in the right; the verdict of the crowd has been reversed, and Shelley's poetry will endure while the English language lasts.

More than thirty years ago an English critic testified to the profound influence of his genius on contemporary poets. "Imitation of Shelley is obvious," wrote one of his biographers in 1850, "in the majority of the eminent poets of this century." That his influence has become

even more marked since then is sufficiently proved by naming Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne.

While the name of Shelley was growing great in his native land and becoming a synonym for Poetry, while his verse was translated in Germany, Italy, and Spain, and found its way into America, France remained almost in ignorance of his powers; or if he sometimes received a passing tribute in periodical literature, such superficial articles contained little beyond a more or less romantic biography of the poet, or vague commonplaces concerning his genius.* His works remained all but unknown and unappreciated, and one of the deepest thinkers of the age was looked upon as a second or third-class Chatterton, an extravagant and unproductive dreamer, capable at the utmost of supplying a few trivialities to the keepsake literature of the day.

But the moment seems to have arrived for France to do justice to the author of "Alastor," "Prometheus Unbound," "Hellas," "The Cenci," and so many other magnificent poems, a single one of which would suffice to establish a poet's fame for ever. From every quarter of the literary world attention is at length aroused to a poet greater than Byron, but who had not found translation into French, when renderings of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" were already innumerable.† It must be admitted that at the

* An exception must be made in favour of M. Odysse Barot's "Étude," in the *Revue Contemporaine*, November and December, 1867. That article, notwithstanding its inaccuracies and omissions, is the most appreciative work on Shelley that has as yet been published in France.

† Now that French critics are more appreciative of Shelley and his works, some excellent essays on his character and genius, and on some of his poems, have appeared, viz.: An article from the pen of M. Schuré in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, for 1st February, 1877; an excellent chapter by M. Darmesteter, in his "Essais de Littérature Anglaise;"

present time the design of making such a poet as Shelley known in France may seem somewhat rash, and that the editor of a *Traduction Complète* of his poems must possess a certain amount of boldness and courage. Setting aside his title of poet, he is so exceptional a genius, so completely at variance with his epoch, so far removed from the positive, utilitarian, and realistic ideas by which it is absorbed, that the question may be fairly put: What have we to do with such dreamers? What good end can be served by a revolutionary and humanitarian Milton or Shakespeare? Intellectual and moral progress, the reign of Justice and Right, love towards all who suffer and weep on earth, the Beautiful, the Good, the Divine, the Ideal in Nature, in Art, and in Society—we have abolished all such follies!

Clearly it is not to these Bœotians of the nineteenth century that Shelley speaks. More than any other human being he belongs to that race of mankind (living anachronisms) who, finding nothing around them worthy of their song, elevate themselves, by one superhuman stroke of their wings, above the conditions and conventions of the visible world. Their eyes are fixed exclusively on a world of thought and spirit, on eternal ideas that are infinitely more real and true to them than the ephemeral phantasmagoria of the phenomena of space and time, because they are the primordial laws of humanity, the divine spark in man, and guide him, in spite of himself, to his mysterious ends. Happier than other

and a thoughtful and appreciative study of "The Cenci" in M. Sarrazin's work, "Poètes Modernes de l'Angleterre." From M. Taine, in his "Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise," we might have expected criticism more worthy of the genius of Shelley, and of his very great influence on English poetry in this century.

poets, perchance no less gifted than he had they likewise possessed his faith, he never suffered shipwreck on the rocks of doubt and despair; he stands at the antipodes of scepticism, misanthropy, and solitary, fruitless melancholy—a clarion-voice of faith, hope, and love. “Give me but a lever,” he exclaims with Archimedes, “and I will move the world.” And as he was convinced that such a lever could never be found among fragile and perishable things, he sought it in the only faculty which escapes the attacks of circumstance and time—the unconquerable strength of man’s spirit and his will, emanating from that universal spirit in Nature which is God. In this sense he may be termed the most spiritual, the most ideal, the most religious of poets. His atheism, or pantheism, whichever we may choose to call it, is but an act of faith in that divine something that his soul felt within herself when communing with Nature. If, in this high sense, he is the most religious of poets, he is also, in the strongest acceptation of the term, the most inspired; and it is to him, if to any one among modern poets, we may apply the name of *vates*. He sees, perceives, and feels what he sings; and the spirit, as he was wont to repeat, becoming like unto the object of its contemplation, he is transformed into his own conceptions; the spirit of Nature becomes incarnate within him; he is like unto a seer and a prophet; at times he is an echo of Job, Isaiah, and Christ.

When thus inspired, the abstract becomes visible; allegory is real; metaphysics are transformed into a living mythology, “a splendid Pantheon,” as Macaulay says. An impassioned and living idealism is the keynote of the poetry of Shelley.

He possesses in a more marked degree than

any other poet of our time a warmth and tenderness of heart, a love of mankind, unequalled in expression save by Shakespeare; it is a love that attains to heroism, to self-sacrifice, to martyrdom.

It has been well remarked by one of our young French poets,* who has more than one point of resemblance to Shelley: "Both Shakespeare and Shelley have sucked the milk of human kindness, their wide sympathies embrace all ages and every people; no form of religion can contain them, they overflow with nature and humanity."

All Shelley's morality and philosophy may be summed up in one word—*Love*! but it is love in its highest and most ideal acceptation, as it was understood by Plato, Jesus, and Dante, the love that consists in the universal attraction of all beings, the shining of the Everlasting Beauty in the soul of man, the explanation of life; it is love as set forth not long ago by one of the few Platonists of this century, when he wrote concerning a dialogue not understood by the Pharisees of our day, and being filled with the spirit of *Phædrus* and the *Banquet*, exclaimed: "Love is the real Orpheus. . . . I am convinced it will hold an important place in the philosophy of the future." When the day shall have come for Shelley's poems to be, I do not say popular, but understood and appreciated by delicate and pure minds, M. Renan's *desideratum* will not be far from realisation.

Michelet, in his fine work, "La Mer," describes two kinds of melancholy or sadness: the one appertaining to women, the other to strong men—the one peculiar to sensitive souls who weep for themselves, and the other to the unselfish

* Maurice Bouchor, "Notice sur Shelley" (*Revue des Chefs-d'œuvre*, 10 Février, 1884); also an article in the *Passant*, 5th January, 1887.

hearts who accept their own lot and always bless Nature, but who, at the same time, are pained by the evils in the world, and draw strength to resist and act from their very sufferings.

It may be affirmed that the soul of Shelley was stricken by both these forms of sadness, but that which dominates is the second, the heroic melancholy which is born of sympathy with all the sorrows of humanity, and of despair at being unable to apply a remedy.

Like all great souls who are devoted to the progress and happiness of the human race, Shelley dreamed of a new golden age, of a universal regeneration, whose dawn will appear when man shall cast off his borrowed nature, and become once more his true self.

At an age when, generally speaking, life presents itself in smiling garb, Shelley was deeply moved at the sight of the evil in the world, and told himself that all the active forces of the human intellect should tend to lessen if not to eliminate it altogether from the face of the earth, to turn, as he often said, this world into a heaven; that if religions, traditional philosophy, and political institutions are incapable of obtaining this result, it is because they systematically deviate from those great moral and natural principles which are the foundation of every truly human and progressive idea; that to Poetry alone, therefore, belongs the duty of creating anew, as it were, the understanding and the heart of man, which have been misled and disfigured by prejudice, habit, and servile obedience, each and all the tainted fruits of egotism. Poetry alone, that is to say Inspiration (which is but the echo of the great voice of Nature in the soul of the poet) can mount to the pure and single source whence flow the ideas of Truth, Justice, and Love, they only being capable of directing humanity towards

happiness, and if the spirit of good in the world has been able to resist the incessant attacks of the spirit of evil (viz. tyranny, authority in all its forms of faith, custom, education), if, in a word, human nature is entitled not to despair of itself, it is owing to the poets alone, to the true teachers who, rising above their age, above the ephemeral institutions of religion and policy, have from time to time led humanity back to the contemplation of the natural, indestructible, and eternal order of things, in which are contained the only laws that can bring forth improvement and happiness to mankind. Such have been the inventors of language, of music, and of all the arts. Such were Job and the Prophets, Homer, Æschylus and Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and Rousseau. "Such shall I be if I am a poet," Shelley said to himself. And he kept his word.

His poems are full of modern revolutionary ideas, but still more full of the wisdom of the ancients, echoing, as it were, every great poet and every great thinker of all the ages; he is their brother and successor. His poetry, according to a definition of Byron's which might be Shelley's own, is, in truth, "the consciousness of a past and future world," that "before and after" which he has sung.

The history of Shelley's life is inseparable from his works, which, for the most part, are the moral autobiography of his soul; and we have sought it above all in Shelley himself, in his poems, in his numerous prose writings or fragments,* and especially in his letters, of which

* H. B. Forman, "The Prose Works of P. Shelley," 4 vols., 1880. Mr. Forman has also edited "The Poetical Works of Shelley," 4 vols., 1882. Besides this magnificent edition, M. Rossetti has edited "Shelley's Poetical Works," 3 vols., 1881, with the latest philological criticisms on the poet.

we regret we can only offer a few extracts; finally in the recollections and memoirs written by his wife and the few friends who knew him intimately. We have also made use of more recent biographies, especially when, as is the case with those by MacCarthy* and Rossetti,† the most scrupulous historical accuracy is combined with reverence for their subject and impartial criticism.

But what are we to say of a dull and spiteful composition in two enormous quarto volumes of nearly a thousand pages, in which Mr. Jeaffreson has chosen, under the title of "The Real Shelley,"‡ to make himself the mouthpiece of every calumny, of every grudge, of every enmity harboured against the great poet by Anglican cant? Two volumes as thick as his own would be required for his refutation, and who would care to read them? We shall content ourselves by giving an occasional specimen of this puerile yet elephantine criticism, while we regret that real talent should have been wasted on such an ungrateful task. Mr. Jeaffreson's big book proves but one thing: that Shelley struck home when he attacked the intolerant hypocrisy of Anglican fanaticism, which has never been capable either of learning or forgetting.

If there are some shadows or stains on Shelley's character and life, they fade away and disappear in the resplendent light of his genius, and we may give him the benefit of his own wise reflections on the great poets who preceded him. Mr. Jeaffreson would have done well to

* "Shelley's Early Life, from Original Sources," by Denis Florence MacCarthy, 1872.

† "Memoir of Shelley," at the beginning of the first vol. of his edition of Shelley's poems.

‡ "The Real Shelley," by J. C. Jeaffreson, author of "The Real Lord Byron," 2 vols., 1885.

meditate on these words before taking up his pen :

Let us for the moment stoop to the arbitration of popular breath, and usurping and uniting in our own persons the incompatible characters of accuser, witness, judge, and executioner, let us decide without trial, testimony, or form, that certain motives of those who are "there sitting where we dare not soar" are reprehensible. Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Virgil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso was a madman, that Lord Bacon was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet laureate. It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance ; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow ;" they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, time. . . "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

To Shelley may be applied, more fitly than to any other, the noble words used by Berlioz regarding himself :

There are among men certain beings endowed with a peculiar sensitiveness. They do not feel either in the same manner or the same degree as other men, and in their regard the exception becomes the rule. Their peculiar nature gives the key to their extraordinary life, which in its turn affords an explanation of their fate. Now it is exceptional natures who lead the world ; and it is well that it should be so, for by their struggles and their pain they purchase light and movement for humanity.

Mr. Jeaffreson's book increased our eager expectation of Mr. Dowden's "Life of Shelley," which promised to contain the latest historical criticism of the poet.* Nor were we disappointed. Thanks to his work, we have been able to fill up more than one gap in our earlier labours, and

* "The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley," by Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature in the University of Dublin, in 2 vols. London : Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1886.

to form a more decided opinion on certain points in the poet's life that were open to doubt and controversy. The numerous and important original sources whence Mr. Dowden has derived new material of all kinds render his "*Life of Shelley*" a crowning work, which supplies the place of all others, and must necessarily be consulted by any future student of the poet. In perusing it, we could not but regret that we might not substitute for our own work a simple translation of its admirable pages. But, at any rate, we have given in substance all the valuable information he has added to the story of Shelley and of Shelley's genius. In addition to the above sources, so various and numerous that of themselves they supply sufficient matter for an ample biography, we must acknowledge the reception of documents of all kinds from the zealous and enthusiastic Shelley Society in London. This Society, ranking worthily with those devoted to Shakespeare and Spenser, omits no means of adding daily some fresh revelation to the poet's history, some new ray to his aureole.

Shelley believed that poets could only be rendered in another language by their equals, and in the same rhythm as the original verse; and following these rules, he has himself translated into English verse favourite passages from his great models, Homer, Euripides, Dante, Calderon, and Goethe.

Until a French poet worthy of Shelley shall translate his poems into verse, following in the track of some few shining footsteps,* we have

* We allude to some excellent renderings of detached poems which have lately been published, and have served us as models, viz., "*The Cenci*" and "*Hellas*," translated by Madame Tola Dorian; "*Alastor*," by M. Sarrazin; part of "*Queen Mab*," by F. V. Hugo; and a few short pieces by M. Maurice Bouchor.

endeavoured to render into dull and ungrateful prose, not perhaps the untranslatable music and harmony, but at least the movement, the warmth, the delicacy of his thought, and something of the brightness, the power, the strangeness, and the daring originality of his expression. Shelley himself would, doubtless, have pardoned us for thus destroying his divine music, for the reason that by means of our translation a greater number of human souls would share in the treasures of wisdom and tenderness that he would fain have spread before the whole world.

We are glad to express our gratitude to those who, in order to render our work less imperfect, have lent us, with a zeal beyond all praise, the help of their judgment and advice. They have kindly consented to accept the dedication of some of Shelley's masterpieces; but we are conscious that their best reward will be the knowledge that they have helped to popularise a poet who cannot be read without being loved, and who cannot be loved without exciting among men a longing to become like him, to be better, more generous, and more human.

F. RABBE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS OF SHELLEY—FIELD PLACE— BRENTFORD—1792—1805.

ON August 4th, 1792, at Field Place, near the picturesque little town of Horsham, in Sussex—the county which had already brought forth Collins and Otway—a child was born who was destined to become indisputably the greatest English poet of the nineteenth century. In the little chamber in which he first saw the light the following inscription may now be read.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Was born in this room,
August 4th, 1792.

Shrine of the dawning speech and thought
Of Shelley sacred be,
To all who bow where Time has brought
Gifts to Eternity.

Two spirits, that of Plato and that of the French Revolution, met, wondering at each other, over the cradle of this marvellous child. The Spirit of Revolution had found her Poet. Through a strange combination of destiny, she marked a scion of England's cold and selfish aristocracy on the forehead as her Pindar, as though she needed,

while standing ankle-deep in blood, to cool her brow in the mists of the North, and to take sanctuary in the virginal and noble soul, where her purest and sublimest accents should reverberate for ever.

Without retracing, with certain of his biographers, the poet's ancestors to the fabulous Sir Guyon de Shelley, the contemporary of Roland and Charlemagne, we can, nevertheless, thanks to the genealogical tree provided by Mr. Forman, follow the direct line of ascent of the Shelleys of Goring Castle, to which branch Percy Bysshe Shelley belonged, so far as the year 1623. We will not delay over the arguments by which Mr. Jeaffreson endeavours in a long chapter of his bulky protest to prove that the Castle Goring branch had nothing in common with the more aristocratic branch of the Michaelsgrove Shelleys, that it owned no remarkable name, no illustrious member, and that the poet's family has, in fact, no right to be called patrician. What matters it to Shelley's fame that the nobility of his family should be more or less authenticated, or his coat of arms more or less ancient? His nobility consists in his genius, and, as he himself proudly foretold,

What have we done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known ;
That record shall remain, when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion ;
And fame in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

If there was in Shelley something of the aristocrat, "the quintessence of a gentleman," as Hunt says, it was the product of an exquisite combination of sentiment, of moral grace, and of habitual sympathy.

The first baronetcy in the family of the Castle Goring Shelleys was bestowed on Bysshe Shelley,

the poet's grandfather, a remarkable character, with strange and striking traits of likeness to his grandson, and yet strongly contrasting with him.

Of great personal beauty and charm of address, he had succeeded, after a somewhat obscurely passed youth, in winning successively the hands and fortunes of two heiresses, whose wealth had principally attracted him. The first, Mary Catherine Mitchell, the only daughter of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell, of Horsham, ran away with him from her father's house when eighteen years of age. They were married in London, whence they proceeded to Paris.

This episode in the life of the grandfather was to be reproduced in that of the grandson, but with an essential difference. The poet, in carrying off his successive brides, was not actuated by cupidity, but by love.

Mary Bysshe Shelley died in 1760, leaving three children, one of whom, Timothy Shelley, was destined to be the father of the poet. Nine years later, Bysshe, at the age of thirty-eight, again eloped with an heiress, Miss Elizabeth Jane Sidney Perry, the only daughter of William Perry, and descending in a direct line from the Sidneys, Earls of Leicester. Her fortune was one of the largest in Kent. Five sons and two daughters were the issue of this marriage.

With very pardonable weakness, and although not one drop of Sidney blood ran in his veins, Shelley liked to reckon the great Sir Philip Sidney among his ancestors. In his "Adonais" he calls him "A spirit without spot." From an intellectual and moral point of view, this indeed is his true descent and legitimate aristocracy.

After the death of his elder brother, who died childless in 1790, Bysshe Shelley devoted himself to the embellishment of Field Place, of which he was the only representative. With advancing

years he had become more and more eccentric. While spending eighty thousand pounds in building the seat of the new baronets of Castle Goring, he spent the last thirty years of his life poorly enough in a little cottage on the Arun. He was assiduous in frequenting the Horsham public-houses, where he laboured *inter pocula* (without drinking, however) for the electoral successes of the Whigs, and thus succeeded in obtaining a baronetcy in 1806, through his patron, the Duke of Norfolk. On his death in 1815, he left a large fortune of £300,000 in the funds, and £20,000 a year, without counting £10,000 in bank-notes hidden in his sofa cushions or between the pages of the few books that he possessed.

With all these eccentricities of a gentleman of the olden time, Sir Bysshe displayed a great independence of character. He was profoundly sceptical in philosophy, and entirely without speculative opinions of his own; but he professed an extreme tolerance for the opinions of others. Shelley speaks of him in one of his letters as an atheist, who looked forward to annihilation only at the close of life.

Both his unbelief and his tolerance drew him towards his grandson in the same measure that they estranged him from his own son, who was far from sharing those sentiments.

Shelley, who was always on affable and courteous terms with his grandfather, although there was no great familiarity between them, spoke of him without either affection or dislike; but he could not forgive his indifference to the progress of humanity, his want of generosity and heart, and, more than all, his lust for gold, that "curse of man," as he calls it. Some traces of his grandfather may perhaps be recognised in one of the characters in "Rosalind and Helen," who dies "pale with a quenchless thirst of gold."

The poet's father, Timothy Shelley, had received the usual education of a gentleman of the period. After an undistinguished career at Oxford, he had made the customary grand tour of Europe. According to Medwin, all he brought back with him was a very superficial acquaintance with France, a claim to knowledge of the world, and an extremely bad painting of Vesuvius in eruption. He was a thorough English gentleman of the school of Chesterfield; he reduced politeness to outward formalities, and morality to expediency. He was proud of his name and wealth, and was ready to forgive his son any and everything except a marriage beneath him. His religious opinions were extremely broad, although he professed to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Established form of worship; but in philosophy he held with *noism*, to use Shelley's word. His moral sense was somewhat dull, though he was servile in his conformity to rules and conventionalities, in a word, to *cant*, that social hypocrisy which Byron declares to be "the only homage paid to virtue in England." He would sacrifice the most imperious sentiments of nature to the respect due to established forms, yet he understood perfectly how to take care of the material interests and comforts of life. A brilliant sportsman, a vain man, although without any kind of talent; proud of his son's genius, provided it should shed some political lustre on his name and family; playing rather a poor part in politics, merely voting with his party as a thorough-going partisan of the Duke of Norfolk; such a man, we may agree with Mr. Rossetti, "was ill-adapted to be the father of so divine a phenomenon as Percy Bysshe Shelley."

In 1791, at the age of thirty-eight, he had married a young lady of good family and rare loveliness—Miss Elizabeth Pilfold, the daughter

of Charles Pilfold, Esq., of Effingham, Surrey. Of her the poet says, "She was gentle and tolerant, but narrow-minded." She was intelligent, a good letter-writer, and yet with very little liking for literature, especially poetry. Her yielding disposition caused her always to take the side of paternal authority between her husband and her son, while her orthodox feelings were readily alarmed at the influence the young free-thinker might exercise over his sisters' minds, to the prejudice of their salvation.

Two sons and five daughters, all of rare beauty, were the issue of this marriage. Percy Bysshe Shelley was the eldest.

His early and altogether feminine education among his young sisters at Field Place left an indelible mark on his mind. His childish love for his sisters, for those angelically beautiful creatures who constituted all his world, became the type of the Platonic love he laid at the feet of women, when they seemed to him to realise in part the pure ideal he had beheld in the unconscious visions of his childhood.

All his life he recalled with delight his awakening as a child to the joys of home, to innocent affection, to untroubled and passionless love, and at the same time to the first revelations of Nature's magic. He has described these impressions of his childhood, these primitive elements of reflection and imagination, in the second canto of "The Revolt of Islam":

The star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unrepenting brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

That delightful life, spent in the companionship of lovely, refined, and pure beings, beneath the tender eyes of a mother, "that innocent Paradise" did not last long for Shelley. The sensitive plant, whom the first contact with the rude realities of the world would wound for ever, was soon transplanted from the maternal Eden to the rough fields of life and social conflict. At the age of six he began to learn the rudiments of Latin from the Rev. Mr. Edwards, the vicar of Warnham, a good old man whom he remembered with esteem. No doubt the regard and esteem felt by Shelley for country clergymen, whose sublime mission of sacrifice and self-devotion, apart from all religious dogmatism, he could not but admire, is due to this recollection. Is it paradoxical to say that there was the making of a "Vicaire Savoyard" in the author of "Queen Mab"?

At one moment of his life he had a passing thought of entering the Church.

The following narrative shows us the profoundly Christian side of Shelley's character whenever he came in contact with a purely human and moral Christianity :

"We were walking in the early summer," relates Peacock, "through a village where there was a good vicarage house with a nice garden, and the front wall of the vicarage was covered with corchorus in full flower. He stood some time admiring the vicarage wall. The extreme quietness of the scene, the pleasant pathway through the village churchyard, and the brightness of the summer morning, apparently concurred to produce the impression under which he suddenly said to me: 'I feel strongly inclined to enter the Church. . . . Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided disciple than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman may do. . . . It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land.' I replied that in practice he would meet with too many obstacles to his aspirations. We

walked on in thoughtful silence for a few minutes, and then conversed on other subjects."

However imperfect may have been the early schooling he received from the vicar of Warnham, it nevertheless bore precocious fruit in the marvellous boy, whose feats of memory were prodigious. His sister Helen describes the astonishment with which the elders of Field Place would listen to this baby of six or seven repeating Gray's lines on "The Cat and the Goldfish," word for word, without missing a syllable, after only once reading the verses.

At the age of eight he began to emulate Gray, and to try his strength in verse. The earliest English verses that we possess by him are entitled "Lines to a Cat," and were written, it is believed, in 1800.

At ten years old Shelley left the parental roof for the school at Sion House, Isleworth, near Brentford. His cousin Medwin was already there, and has given us precious recollections of that period of his life:

This school, though not a "Dotheboys Hall," was conducted with the greatest regard for economy. A slice of bread, with an "idee" of butter smeared on the surface and "thrice skimmed sky-blue," to use an expression of Bloomfield the poet, was miscalled a breakfast. The supper, a repetition of the same frugal repast; and the dinner, at which it was never allowed to send up the plate twice without its eliciting an observation from the distributor that effectually prevented a repetition of the offence, was made up generally of ingredients that were *anonymous*. The Saturday's meal, a sort of pie, a collect from the plates during the week. This fare, to a boy accustomed to the delicacies of the table, was not the most attractive. . . .

Exchanging for the caresses of his sisters, an association with boys, mostly the sons of London shopkeepers, of rude habits and coarse manners, who made game of his girlishness, and despised him because he was not "one of them," nor disposed to enter into their sports, to wrangle, or fight; confined between four stone walls, in a playground of very

limited dimensions—a few hundred yards—(with a single tree in it, and that the Bell tree, so called from its having suspended in its branches the odious bell, whose din, when I think of it, yet jars in my ears), instead of breathing the pure air of his native fields, and rambling about the plantations and flower gardens of his father's country seat—the sufferings he underwent at his first outset in this little world were most acute. Sion House was indeed a perfect Hell to him. Fagging, that “vestige of barbarous times,” reigned supreme. Shelley was the victim and the scapegoat of these petty despots, who used to vent on him their ill-humours in harsh words, and sometimes even in blows. Poor Shelley ! he was always the martyr, and it was under the smart of this oppression that he wrote :

A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why ; until there rose
From the near school-room voices that, alas !
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around ;
But none were near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground,
So without sham I spake : “ I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power ; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check.” I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

We were about sixty schoolfellows. I well remember the day when he was added to the number. A new arrival is always a great excitement to the other boys, who pounce upon a *fresh man* with the boldness of birds of prey. All tormented him with questionings. There was no end to their mockery when they found that he was ignorant of peg-top, or marbles, or leap-frog, or hop-scotch, much more of fives or cricket. One wanted him to spar, another to run a race with him. He was a tyro in both these accomplishments, and the only welcome of the neophyte was a general shout of derision. To all these impertinences he made no reply, but with a look of disdain written in his countenance, turned his back on his new associates, and when he was alone found relief in tears.

Shelley was at this time tall for his age, slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow-chested, with a complexion fair and ruddy, a face rather long than oval. His features, not regularly handsome, were set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of countenance was one of extreme sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent, considered by phrenologists to indicate a great aptitude for verbal memory. They were at times, when he was abstracted as he often was in contemplation, dull, and as it were insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with fire and intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones—when anything much interested him, harsh and unmodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost. As is recorded of Thomson, he was naturally calm, but when he heard of, or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible in his countenance.

As his port had the meekness of a maiden, the heart of a young virgin who had never crossed her father's threshold to encounter the rude world could not be more susceptible of all the sweet charities than his. In this respect, Shelley's disposition would happily illustrate the innocence and virginity of the Muses. He possessed a most affectionate regard for his relations, particularly for the females of his family. It was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother and sisters—for the two eldest he had a special fondness, and I will here observe that one, unhappily removed from the world before her time, possessed a talent for oil-painting that few artists have acquired, and that the other bore a striking resemblance in her beauty and amiability to his cousin, Harriet Grove, of whom I shall have to speak. . . . The dead languages were to him as bitter a pill as they had been to Byron, but he acquired them, as it were, intuitively, and seemingly without study, for during school-hours he was wont to gaze at the passing clouds—all that could be seen from the lofty windows which his desk fronted—or watch the swallows as they flitted past, with longing for their wings; or would scrawl in his school-books—a habit he always continued—rude drawings of pines and cedars, in memory of those on the lawn of his native home. On these occasions, our master would sometimes peep over his shoulder, and greet his ears with no pleasing salutation.

Our pedagogue, when he was in one of his good humours, dealt also in what he called *facetia*, and when we came to the imprisonment of the winds in the Cave of Eolus, as described in the "Æneid," used, to the merriment of the

school, who enjoyed the joke much, to indulge in Cotton's * parody on the passage, prefacing it with an observation that his father never forgave him for the Travestie. . . . Shelley afterwards expressed to me his disgust at this bad taste, for he never could endure obscenity in any form.

A scene that to poor Shelley, who, instead of laughing, had made a face at the silly attempt at wit, and which his preceptor had probably observed, has often recurred to me. A few days after this, he had a theme set him for two Latin lines on the subject of *Tempestas*. He came to me to assist him in the task. Shelley, acting on a hint from me, made use of the following distich from Ovid's "Tristibus," (the doctor was acquainted only with the "Metamorphoses"):

Me miserum ! quanti montes voluntur aquarum !
Jam jam tacturos sidera celsa putes.

When Shelley's turn came to carry up his exercise, my eyes were turned on the *Dominie*. There was a *peculiar* expression in his features, which, like the lightning before the storm, portended what was coming. When he came to the lines, he read them with a loud voice, laying a sarcastic emphasis on every word, and suiting the action to the word by boxes on each side of Shelley's ears. Then came the comment: "Jam, jam! Pooh, pooh, boy! raspberry jam! Do you think you are at your mother's?" Here a burst of laughter echoed through the listening benches. "Don't you know that I have a sovereign objection to those two monosyllables with which schoolboys cram their verses? Haven't I told you so a hundred times already? *Tacturos . . . sidera . . . celsa . . . putes*—what, do the waves on the coast of Sussex strike the stars, eh?—*celsa sidera*—who does not know that the stars are high? Where did you find that epithet? In your 'Gradus ad Parnassum,' I suppose. You will never mount so high" (another box on the ears which nearly felled him to the ground). "*Putes!* you may think this very fine, but to me it is all balderdash, hyperbolical stuff" (another cuff), after which he

* Charles Cotton (1630-1687), known by his burlesque poems and translations. He brought out Scarron's works in English, with the title of "Scarronides; or, Virgil Travestied," and "Lucian Burlesqu'd; or, the Scoffer Scoff'd." He also translated Montaigne's Essays, 1759, 3 vols.

Cotton's parodies were very popular in England; we have a copy of the fifth edition of his Virgil (1756).

tore up the verses, and said in a fury: "There, go now, sir, and see if you can't write something better."

Shelley passed among his schoolfellows as a strange and unsocial being, for when a holiday relieved us from our tasks, and the other boys were engaged in such sports as the narrow limits of our prison-court allowed, Shelley, who entered into none of them, would pace backwards and forwards—I think I see him now—along the southern wall, indulging in various vague and undefined ideas, the chaotic elements, if I may say so, of what afterwards produced so beautiful a world. I very early learned to penetrate into this soul sublime—why may I not say divine, for what is there that comes nearer to God than genius in the heart of a child? I, too, was the only one at the school with whom he could communicate his sufferings or exchange ideas. I was, indeed, some years his senior, and he was grateful to me for so often singling him out for a companion, for it is well known that it is considered in some degree a *condescension* for boys to make intimates of those in a lower form than themselves. Then we used to walk together up and down his favourite spot, and there he would outpour his sorrows to me, with observations far beyond his years, and which, according to his after ideas, seemed to have sprung from an antenatal life. I have often thought that he had these walks of ours in mind, when in describing an antique group he says: "Look, the figures are walking with a sauntering and idle pace, and talking to each other as they walk, as you may have seen an elder and a younger boy at school, walking in some grassy spot of the playground, with that tender friendship for each other which the age inspires."

If Shelley abominated one task more than another it was a dancing lesson. At a ball at Willis's Rooms, where, among other pupils of Sala, I made one, an aunt of mine, to whom the letter No. I in the Appendix was addressed, asked the dancing master why Bysshe was not present, to which he replied in his broken English: "Mon Dieu, madame, what should he do here? Master Shelley will not learn anything—he is *so gauche*." In fact, he contrived to abscond as often as possible from the dancing lessons, and when forced to attend, suffered inexpressibly.

Meanwhile, careless and idle as he appeared, Shelley was outstripping all his schoolfellows. His imagination was fed on wonderful tales and stories. He devoured every book that came in

his way, especially the little sixpenny volumes bound in blue wrappers telling of fairies, giants, monsters, bandits, assassins, and magicians; amongst others was the story of "Peter Wilkins and His Flying Wives," which had a singular charm for him. For want of a school library the boys used to go secretly to a small circulating library at Brentford, and there lay in a provision of forbidden goods, including the works of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. But these were too tame, too sober, too realistic for the soaring imagination of Shelley. He liked tales of thrilling adventure, of heroic and superhuman passion. The romances of Mrs. Radcliffe and of Rosa Matilda (Mrs. Byrne) were more to his taste. One of the latter, "Zofloya, or the Moor,"* influenced him much as Byron was influenced by John Moore's "Zeluco." From "Zeluco" came "Childe Harold," and "Zofloya" inspired the romances written by Shelley in his sixteenth year.

As was the case with Milton, Schiller, and Goethe, this constant dwelling on the marvellous had a decisive influence in directing the bent of his imagination. The harsh realities of life had already driven him to the realms of fiction, where he found the realisation of his youthful ideals, and we must not be surprised if at that period he had faith in prodigies, in apparitions, in the evocation of the dead. To this, indeed, he often alludes in his later works, although such childish superstitions had then lost their hold on him. But to Shelley, Poetry always remained the great enchantress, who by a touch of her wand creates another earth, another heaven, and other men, and produces at will a supernatural spell that lifts us above the dull and prosaic realities of life.

Such a state of poetical excitement, at a time

* Translated into French by Madame de Viterne, 4 vols., 1812.

when his constitution was still unformed, necessarily affected his organisation and engendered, as it were, a second intellectual life, resembling hallucination or waking dreams.

"He was subject," says Medwin, "to strange and sometimes frightful dreams, and was haunted by apparitions that bore all the semblance of reality. . . . He was given to waking dreams, a sort of lethargy and abstraction that became habitual to him, and after the fit was over, his eyes flashed, his lips quivered, his voice was tremulous with emotion, a sort of ecstasy came over him, and he talked more like a spirit or an angel than a human being."

During Shelley's second or third year at Sion House, Adam Walker, a learned astronomer, delivered some lectures and exhibited his orrery in the large hall of the academy. This was a new revelation to Shelley; he was startled at the calculations of astronomy, and delighted with the idea of the plurality of Worlds.

The infinite spaces of the heavens became full of new meanings, they were peopled by him with wonderful and superhuman beings; and his imagination began to build up, partly on scientific bases and partly on his own conceptions, that strange and wonderful cosmography which played so important a part in the greater number of his poetical creations. "Saturn," says Medwin, "which was then visible, and which we afterwards looked at through a telescope, particularly interested him, its atmosphere seeming to him an irrefragable proof of its being inhabited like our globe. He dilated on some planets being more favoured than ourselves, and was enchanted with the idea that we should, as spirits, make the grand tour through the heavens. . . . He was equally charmed with chemical experiments, particularly with the fact that earth, air, and water are not

simple elements. This course of lectures ended with the solar microscope, which constituted to most of us the most attractive part of the exhibition and afterwards he made a solar microscope his constant companion." The noblest use to which he put it was, doubtless, when one day it was pawned by him in order to pay the debts of some poor fellow.*

Towards the end of his stay at Brentford (1805) Shelley met with one of those exquisite natures towards which he was attracted by his own pure and affectionate heart. It is not uncommon—especially in England, where, owing to the system of education, family ties are easily broken, or, at the least, but little fostered—for boys to seek a substitute for home affections in school friendships, which, in such cases, become fervent. Byron, too, had been enthusiastic in such attachments. In one of his note-books he had copied the following sentence from Marmontel:

"Friendship which in the world is barely a sentiment, amounts to a passion in the cloister."†

Shelley was even more adapted than Byron to taste the exquisite happiness of impassioned friendship, and for a short while he enjoyed that happiness at Brentford. An affection of this ideal nature sprang up between himself and a boy of the same age, whose name we do not know.

Shortly before his death he put in writing

* An ingenuous and touching testimony to Shelley's generosity and tenderness of heart, is given us by his father's serving-man, Lucas, whose duty it was to accompany the boy in his rides about Field Place, and to put out his candle when he had been reading in bed. "He was so generous, that if he met with any one in distress he would give lavishly, and if he had no money of his own, he used to borrow of me." Nor did this kind-hearted generosity ever diminish.

† Moore's "Memoirs of Lord Byron," Vol. I., p. 76.

a recollection of this romantic episode of his school-days at Brentford : *

The nature of love and friendship is very little understood, and the distinctions between them ill-established. This latter feeling—at least a profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex—often precedes the former. It is not right to say, merely, that friendship is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. It rejects with disdain all thoughts but those of an elevated and imaginative character. I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. . . .

The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my schoolboy days; but, either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship. I remember in my simplicity, writing to my mother a long account of his admirable qualities, and my own devoted attachment. I suppose she thought me out of my wits, for she returned no answer to my letter. I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity in which we had bound ourselves towards them and towards each other. I recollect thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night when we parted to go to bed we kissed each other like children, as we still were.

* "Fragment of an Essay on Friendship." Forman, Shelley's Prose Works, II., p. 407. Mr. Dowden names as the friend to whom Shelley possibly alludes, a schoolfellow named Tredcroft, who, like Shelley, was thought a peculiar character, was possessed of considerable poetical talent, and died young.

Up to this period in his life, tenderness, delicacy, especially moral delicacy, predominated in Shelley, together with a love of the marvellous, a tendency to reverie, and an ecstatic sense of poetry. But he was far from being, as Mr. Jeaffreson would imply, an enervated, doll-like creature, regretting his mother's apron-strings.* Endowed with feminine delicacy and sensibility, he also displayed, from earliest childhood, an unconquerable will, an unusual manliness and strength of character, and he showed a perfect consciousness of these two sides of his nature when, after shedding tears at the sight of human misery, he predicted of himself: "I will be meek and bold!" It is just because those two minds, those two sides of human nature, were united in him that he was a perfect poet. If, on the one hand, he is the poet of woman through his charm, his sweetness, and his *morbidezza*, on the other he is still more the poet of great thoughts, of strong passions, of all that is most energetic and masculine in man. To him we may apply the allegory of the mysterious Hermaphrodite, symbol of Art and Beauty kneaded and shaped by the hands of his Witch of Atlas, this Hermaphrodite being none other than himself: †

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
 Together, tempering the repugnant mass
 With liquid love—all things together grow
 Through which the harmony of love can pass ;

And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow,
 A living Image which did far surpass
 In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
 Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

* "He was a gentle English girl rather than a gentle English boy."—Vol. I., p. 68.

† "The Witch of Atlas," xxxv.—xxxvii.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked ;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipt with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere.

CHAPTER II.

SHELLEY AT ETON—1804-1809.

SHELLEY entered Eton in July, 1804, and remained there until the end of 1809.

There was then at Eton a man whose severity has become proverbial, and old Keate's time is still spoken of in the school. Compared with him, Dr. Greenlaw's yoke was light. The boys, declared that his name was derived from χέω, I shed; ἄτη, woe. Hogg, with his habitual humour, has sketched for us the portrait of this modern Orbilius :

Dr. Keate, the head master of Eton School, was a short, short-necked, short-legged man ; thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bulldog ; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching ; his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth, were exactly like that comely and engaging animal, and so were his short, crooked legs. It was said in the school, that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking, after the long, mild, Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and under whom Keate had been master of the lower school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess ; it is reported, that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that, on the whole, he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid

of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was peculiarly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley.

Yet, notwithstanding all his peculiarities, Dr. Keate was an excellent teacher and an upright man. "We must not hold lightly," writes one of his pupils, "the man who has flogged half the ministers, secretaries, bishops, generals, and dukes of the present century."

The scholars were worthy of the master. Fagging was an institution at Eton as well as at Sion House. Shelley, not satisfied with refusing to obey his fag-master, Matthews,* declared war on the system, and stood apart from the whole school, for by declining to submit to tyranny from one, he drew on himself the hatred and vengeance of all; and the boy-tyrants, when their dearest prerogatives were assailed, made use of the same arguments against the rebel as did the privileged classes at a later date, when Shelley lifted up his voice against their hypocrisy and prejudice, and endeavoured to combat the social *fagging*, from which he would fain have delivered his country and all mankind, by reason.

At Eton his schoolfellows jeered at him, hooted him, pelted him with mud; afterwards grown men to whom he spoke of liberty, peace, and love, derided, cursed, and banished him.

"I have seen him," wrote an eye-witness of these daily scenes of cruelty, "surrounded, hooted, baited like a maddened bull, and at this distance of time (forty years after), I seem to hear ringing

* Matthews obtained some popularity through his "Diary of an Invalid." Among his older schoolfellows were Milman, John Coleridge, Summer, and Nassau Senior, the great interviewer of the men of the Second Empire.

in my ears the cry which Shelley was wont to utter in his paroxysm of revengeful anger."

He was nicknamed Mad Shelley.

But his courage and constancy were rewarded. His tormentors were sooner wearied of their cruelty than he of enduring and resisting it. The Eton boys recognised at last the strength and gentleness of his nature, the incontestable supremacy of his character and talents.* They unanimously bestowed on him the title of Lord High Atheist, as signifying he was the chief of the independents and contemners of the Eton gods, Dr. Keate and the higher powers of the school. This title made him still more odious to the authorities.

Happily at Windsor he met with a Mentor worthy of him, in the immediate neighbourhood of Eton. Dr. James Lind, a learned physician and chemist, who was popularly considered a kind of conjuror, became his protector, guide, and friend. Ariel had found his Prospero, and Shelley lavished on the good old man all the tenderness and affection his father had failed to win from him. He writes of him :

This man is exactly what an old man ought to be, free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour ; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks ; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body ; tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah ! far more than I owe to my father ; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom.

Far from forgetting him, as Mr. Jeaffreson hints, Shelley has enshrined Dr. Lind in his verse ; and has depicted him as that type of old age in which all ancient virtue and knowledge

* At Oxford Shelley used to exhibit with pride the books his schoolfellows had given him on his leaving Eton. Their names were duly inscribed therein.

are incarnate, as well as every lovable quality which formed Shelley's ideal sage. Zonaras, in "Prince Athanase," and the aged hermit delivering Laon from prison, are but more or less idealised portraits of the poet's Eton Mentor. It is not surprising that this gentle, tolerant old man should have met with the severe censure of Shelley's enemies. In Zonaras, Mr. Jeaffreson sees only a wicked and blaspheming person, a bitter buffoon, an apothecary, a lost soul. It is thus that our French Jeaffresons have treated our great Littré. Dr. Lind's worst crime in the eyes of this critic seems to be that he did not profess so much esteem and affection for "poor old George III." as Mr. Jeaffreson considers his due!

Dr. Lind's sharp onslaughts on the royal personages of the time found, no doubt, a ready echo in the boyish, generous heart. Through a bitter experience of life Shelley's innate hatred of tyranny under whatever form—even when assuming the venerable name of father—had grown and strengthened. That this hatred may have gone so far as to make him forget the respect due to Mr. Timothy Shelley, and to allow his name to become the laughing-stock of his schoolfellows, we will not attempt to deny; but we may be allowed to offer an explanation of so singular a circumstance, and one which seems to reflect on his goodness of heart. One of the most characteristic marks of Shelley is the logical absolutism of his moral ideas. The principles of philosophy, and still more the principles of morality, ruled his mind so strongly, and his intellect was so completely swayed by their logical consequences and deductions, that he was incapacitated from taking note of the finer gradations of thought or sentiment that would have modified the rigidity and diminished the harshness of a less logical mind. Shelley

could never have understood Pascal's aphorism: "The heart has reasons that Reason does not acknowledge."

But Shelley's grievances were not merely philosophical or general. If we may believe him, Mr. Timothy Shelley incurred his hatred by endeavouring to place him in a madhouse. Even if this were a pure hallucination, as some of the poet's biographers have believed, it is certain that the idea produced a state of terror, and that it was one of the motives he habitually alleged to his friends for a frequent change of residence.

Hogg gives us Shelley's own words on the subject :

Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private madhouse. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed, if they had proceeded in their iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and, with the servant's help, I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority ; his love for me ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.

The most important result of Dr. Lind's influence over Shelley was his initiation into the love of scientific research and the true appreciation of the fine works of antiquity. Under his guidance the young Etonian read "The Banquet" of Plato, whose "words of light" he was destined to translate at a later period, and the works of Pliny the Elder, "clear-sighted and benevolent Pliny," as he called him. The chapter "De Deo" came to him as a revelation, and doubtless sowed in his intellect the first germs of atheism. In his notes on "Queen Mab" we

shall find it cited in the front rank of the authorities he brings forward. He also translated part of the "Natural History," but was stopped by the chapters on Astronomy.

In his passionate pursuit of science Shelley did not confine himself to reading. His thirst for the unknown and the marvellous led him to seek by practical experiment for the key of the mysteries of alchemy, to which he felt strongly attracted. Being in the enjoyment of greater liberty than at Brentford, he devoted himself to making all the experiments that were in his power, and for which he could find an opportunity. With his solar microscope he set fire to a train of gunpowder, and set ablaze an old tree-stump;* at night he disturbed the whole house by upsetting a frying-pan full of chemical explosives into his fire; or he might be found in a state of ecstasy over the beautiful coloured flames of which chemistry had taught him the secret.

One of the Eton tutors, Mr. Bethell, nicknamed "Botch Bethell," in whose house Shelley boarded—"one of the dullest fellows in the place," says Packe—coming one day to Shelley's room, found him entranced before the exquisitely beautiful blue flames in which he delighted. Mr. Bethell inquired what he was about. Shelley replied he was raising the devil! The tutor thereupon seizing hold of a mysterious-looking apparatus on the table, was suddenly and violently thrown back against the wall. He had touched the handle of a highly-charged electric battery.

Shelley continued his various experiments during the holidays at Field Place, to the wonder-

* Mr. Jeaffreson expends many pages in deploring with much pathos the fate of the owner of the old stump, the responsibility incurred by Shelley's masters, and the risk of fire to the college buildings. Excellent Mr. Jeaffreson!

ing terror of his sisters. Helen, in one of her letters, gives the following interesting account :

I confess my pleasure was entirely negatived by terror. . . . Whenever he came to me with his piece of folded brown packing-paper under his arm, and a bit of wire and a bottle (if I remember right), my heart would sink with fear at his approach ; but shame kept me silent, and, with as many others as he could collect, we were placed hand-in-hand round the nursery table to be electrified ; but when a suggestion was made that chilblains were to be cured by this means, my terror overwhelmed all other feelings, and the expression of it released me from all future annoyance.

. . . His hands and clothes were constantly stained and corroded by mineral acids, and it seemed but too probable that in the rash ardour of experiment he would set the house on fire, or that he would blind, maim, or kill himself by the explosion of combustibles. He himself used to speak with horror of the consequences of having inadvertently swallowed through accident some mineral poison, I think arsenic, at Eton, which he declared had not only seriously injured his health, but that he feared he should never entirely recover the shock it had inflicted on his constitution.

The marvellous played an important part in the games invented by Shelley for the amusement of his sisters. He used to dress them up as angels, or fiends, and would entertain them with tragical and fantastic stories about the "Great Tortoise" that had lived for ages in Warnham Pond, or the "Old Snake" that for three hundred years had inhabited the gardens of Field Place. But that which appealed most vividly to the imagination of the little girls, was the story of the alchemist Cornelius Agrippa himself. According to Shelley, this old magician lived in the flesh in a large garret, which communicated with the playroom. When his sisters' impatience to behold this mysterious being with the long beard became most eager, Shelley would calm them by promising they should see him on the day when he left the garret for the subterranean cavern they were to dig for him in the orchard.

Shelley's experiments ended by causing such anxiety to the Eton authorities, that the study of chemistry was strictly prohibited.

There is little doubt that our poet's ardour for natural and chemical science was but a superficial passion, fed, for the most part, by his love of the unknown and marvellous, but it would be unjust to attribute it with Mr. Jeaffreson solely to the "moral perversity" that attracted him to forbidden fruit, and in which Shelley himself seems to take pride when he says, in "*Laon and Cythna*":*

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught,
I cared to learn. . . .

He was perfectly aware of the absence of any culture of science in the classical curriculum of Oxford; his intuitive and perspicacious genius perceived the immense field open to students of positive science, that "unjealous heiress" of the secrets of alchemy, and he was especially interested in the benefits that it must necessarily procure for the human race. We shall find him afterwards enthusiastic in the promotion of a scheme for steamers, and he would have been delighted to launch the first of these on the Mediterranean.

If Shelley is often found during his education in opposition to the teachings or the spirit of his teachers, the reason is that their spirit and those teachings appeared to him narrow, retrogressive, and inimical to all real progress. His only error was to have set up too high and too sublime a moral standard, and to have insisted, in spite of all opposition, on conforming his life and conduct to that ideal. In so far he was like

* *Dedication, Stanza v.*

Milton, who also had revolted against the Cambridge rules, and had refused to bear a yoke which was to him intolerable :

Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
Cœteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

No diatribe of Shelley's enemies will, however, convince, when contrasted with the formal testimony in his favour offered by many of his school-fellows, and in particular by W. G. Halliday, in the following letter, which we quote as containing the most complete portrait of the Eton boy that has come to us :*

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, "when thought is speech, and speech is truth;" when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the Park at Windsor, the Terrace; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairyland, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his *Elegy*, of which he was very fond. I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindliness and affectionate ways; he was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye, when he was dwelling

* The letter is dated 1857.

on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence, to watch, and cherish and direct all his noble aspirations, and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing but what was base, and false, and low. He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. . . . When leaving Oxford under a cloud, he said to me: "Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me!" I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814, in London, when he was glad to introduce me to his wife.

In the midst of his philosophy and scientific pursuits, the young Etonian did not neglect literature, and he manifested, in an uncommon degree, every aptitude for becoming an eminent scholar. At fourteen he knew Latin sufficiently well to write the language elegantly in prose and verse; in fact, in Latin verse he was unrivalled. Medwin has preserved for us some specimens of his talent in this line, and among others a translation of the epitaph in Gray's well-known "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard." Shelley must have written these verses with delight.* He

* Hic sinu fessum caput hospitali
Cespitis dormit juvenis ; nec illi
Fata ridebant, popularis ille
Nescius auræ.

Musa non vultu genus arroganti
Rusticâ natum grege despicata ;
Et suum tristic puerum notavit
Sollicitudo.

Indoles illi bene larga ; pectus
Veritas sedem sibi vindicavit ;
Et pari tantis meritis beavit
Munere cælum.

Omne quod mœstis habuit misero
Corde largivit, lacrymam ; recepit
Omne quod cœlo voluit, fidelis
Pectus amici.

recognised himself in more than one line of that epitaph. A youth on whom Fortune would not smile, because he despised popularity; a poet led by the Muses away from the crowd, and marked by Melancholy from childhood; a soul the abode of Sincerity; a heart whose large bounty gave to Misery all he had—a tear, and gained from heaven all he wished—a friend; this description fits Shelley to perfection, and as he penned those lines, the Eton boy must have foreseen a similar epitaph for himself.

To the study of the dead languages Shelley added that of his own, and practised himself in the composition of English prose and verse. He and his schoolfellow Amos wrote some little plays together, which they acted before another boy of the same age, who was their sole audience; and once during his holidays he and his eldest sister wrote a play and sent it to Matthews the comedian, who returned the manuscript with the courteous reply that it would not do for acting.

It might not have been easy to predicate from these childish attempts the future author of "*The Cenci*," but it is certain that even then he loved and appreciated the "tender wisdom" of one whom he looked upon as without a rival, and set above all poets of all time—the author of *King Lear*, "the most perfect specimen of dramatic art in the world."

His mind was full of Shakespeare, and as he lightly ran up or down the stairs in Mr. Hexter's

Longius sed tu fuge curiosus
Cæteras laudes fuge suspicari;
Cæteras culpas fuge velle tractas
Sede tremendâ.

Spe tremescentes recubant in illâ
Sede virtutes pariterque culpæ,
In sui Patris gremio, tremendâ
Sede Deique.

house, he would be gaily singing the rhyme of the witches in *Macbeth*:

Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Besides verse-making during his holidays from Eton, he tried to initiate his sisters into the mysteries of poetry and versification.* A good many specimens of his verse at that time have come down to us. We shall find them hereafter in one of his romances.

These romances were Shelley's most important work while at Eton. His biographers and critics have, to our mind, passed over too lightly these imaginative and romantic effusions of the youthful Shelley. They cannot be ignored without leaving a blank in the history of his mental development.

The Eton romance-writer is an explanation of the Oxford atheist and the poet of "Queen Mab;" and the germ of Shelley as poet, philosopher; and moralist, is contained in novels written by him in his sixteenth year.

Some years ago a subscription was begun by Mr. Oscar Browning, then a master at Eton, to set up a bust of Shelley among the Eton celebrities. The Provost of Eton forbade it, and the subscription list, which had already reached a considerable sum, was suspended. The name of that Provost of Eton deserves to be recorded. It was Dr. Goodford.

* "His first lesson to me," writes his sister Helen, "I perfectly remember. There were several short poems, I think, of which he gave me the subject, and one line about 'an old woman in her bonny gown' (even the rhyme to which I forget) elicited the praise for which I wrote. Subsequently he had them printed, and the mistake I made about sending one of my heroes or heroines out by night and day in the same stanza he would not alter, but excused it by quoting something from Shakespeare."

CHAPTER III.

SHELLEY AS A WRITER OF ROMANCE—
“ZASTROZZI”—“ST. IRVYNE”—1809-1810.

WITH Shelley to conceive was to execute, whether in literature and poetry or in life. He felt an imperious need of communicating his ideal of beauty and goodness to his fellow-men; in what form mattered not so long as it conveyed his impressions faithfully. Hence his thirst for publication during the years at Eton, hence his longing that no spark of beauty or of love should be lost to the world; and endowed as he was with the faculty of appropriating everything in harmony with his own attraction towards the marvellous, the gigantic, and the supernatural, it is not surprising that he chose his models among the authors of the sublime horrors, the extravagant tales, the romantic and sentimental ballads that were just then produced in profusion in England. He had shuddered and grown pale in reading them, and while still full of his conceptions and still palpitating with divine emotion, he attempted to make others shudder and grow pale in their turn.

In April, 1810, Messrs. Wilkie & Robinson brought out a novel entitled “Zastrozzi,”* by P. B. S.

* “Zastrozzi” was unfavourably reviewed in the *Critical Review* for November, 1810. The only interesting point

Mr. Rossetti wonders how any real live publisher was found to give forty pounds for the privilege of publishing such a rhapsody, or reviewers to criticise and expose its alleged immorality. It is, no doubt, far from being a masterpiece; it is in the blood-and-thunder style of Mrs. Radcliffe and of Lewis, and while exaggerating the defects of their style, it betrays in every line the most ingenuous inexperience of literary composition, without sequence, or variety, or probability. But in judging it we must not forget that the author, when he wrote it,* was a youth of seventeen or eighteen, and on a near inspection, it is possible to discern in many passages germs of the brilliant qualities as well as of the defects that mark his early poetical works. The characters sketched out in the novel reappear in after years transfigured by the magic pen of the poet; the hero of "Zastrozzi" becomes the hero of "Laon and Cythna," and more than one episode of the novel is repeated in the poem.

After all, one feels a human heart beating through it, one hears the voice of true, strong passion, something of the stirring and tragic eloquence that bursts forth in "The Cenci."

"Though quite uncharacteristic of me as I now am," wrote Shelley three years after the appearance of "Zastrozzi," "nevertheless these romances serve to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition."†

in the article is that Shelley is even then denounced as the monster of perversity who subsequently was so bitterly attacked by the *Quarterly Review* and the *Literary Gazette*. "The narrative itself, as well as the style in which it is written, is so contemptible that we should have passed it over in silence, only for the indignation excited by its gross and barefaced immorality. . . . We cannot too strongly reprobate the author. His absurd and stupid jargon cannot redeem him from infamy, or his book from the flames."

* "Zastrozzi" was written in 1808 and 1809.

† Letter to Godwin, 1812. He thus describes his mental state: "It is to you and to your works that I owe my restora-

We may describe this state of mind from a moral and philosophic point of view by noting that just then Shelley was, as it were, divided between a certain admiration for the fatalism of the great passions, and the worship of heroism, or of the human will made subservient to that fatality. The sovereign principle of the moral life, self-control, he has made incarnate in his hero Zastrozzi.

Pietro Zastrozzi is the son of a certain Verezzi, an Italian count, and of Olivia Zastrozzi, who at fifteen has been seduced by him, and is afterwards cruelly deserted. Olivia on her death-bed exacts an oath of vengeance from her son. Not satisfied with driving a poniard into his father's heart, Zastrozzi vindictively pursues the young Count Verezzi, heir to that detested name, and in order to enjoy all the delights of revenge at his leisure, he employs every refinement of moral torture suggested by the most infernal ingenuity for inflicting suffering on his victim without depriving him of life. The same situation occurs in Godwin's celebrated novel, "*Caleb Williams*," in which the hero is persecuted after a similar fashion by Mr. Falkland.

Zastrozzi seeks above all to strike Verezzi through his love. Two women are in love with him: one is Julia, Marchesa di Strobazzo, to whom Verezzi has devoted his heart and life; the other is Matilda, Contessa di Laurentini, an enchanting and hateful siren. Both are beautiful and wealthy, and burn with the same jealous and irresistible passion.

The romance opens with Verezzi on his journey to Naples, where Julia awaits him. He is

tion from the state of intellectual lethargy in which I was plunged two years ago. 'St. Irvyne' and 'Zastrozzi' represented my boyish visions, which were wild without being original."

at an inn at Munich, where Zastrozzi gives him a drink by which he is thrown into a heavy sleep. Two sbirri, named Ugo and Bernardo, creatures of Zastrozzi, carry the sleeping man to a carriage, and deposit him in a cavern, in a dense forest in the depths of a gloomy valley. So also, in "Laon and Cythna," Laon, separated from Cythna, as Verezzi from Julia, is borne swooning to the mysterious cavern surmounted by a pillar, where he suffers unimaginable tortures.*

Verezzi awakes from his stupor face to face with his foe, who orders him to follow him. They come to the iron gate of a dungeon in the rock, where the unhappy Verezzi is bound to the wall, as Laon is to the pillar. "With chains which eat into the flesh, alas! with brazen links my naked limbs they bound." Laon says:

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links that I might die.†

Verezzi has no support but his own reflections, which are his greatest torment, and he implores death from his tormentors. Silence is the only answer. "Days and nights seemingly countless" are passed "in the same monotonous uniformity of horror and despair. He scarcely now shuddered when the slimy lizard crossed his naked and motionless limbs. The large earth-worms, which twined themselves in his long and matted hair, almost ceased to excite sensations of horror. Days and nights were undistinguishable from each other, and . . . were lengthened by his perturbed imagination into so many years."

Prometheus, too, bound to the rock by iron chains, counts the moments, "divided by keen pangs, till they seemed years."

* "Laon and Cythna," Canto III., Stanza 11, *et seq.*

† "Laon and Cythna," Stanzas 14 and 19.

Verezzi succeeds, however, in eluding the watchfulness of his keepers, and flies by moonlight across the heath, pursued by Zastrozzi. He is miraculously saved by a gigantic pine-tree, that shelters him while sleeping, and at last reaches Passau, where he falls asleep on some stone steps in the deserted streets. He is awoken by an old woman carrying a basket of flowers to sell in the market.* Claudine (for that is her name), having just lost her son, takes pity on the unfortunate youth, and leads him home to her humble cottage, "a pleasant and cultivated spot, on a little hill overlooking the majestic Danube."

"What induced you," said he to Claudine, as in the evening they sat before the cottage door, "what induced you to make that offer this morning to me?"

"Ah!" said the old woman, "it was but last week that I lost my dear son, who was everything to me; he died by a fever which he caught by his too great exertions in obtaining a livelihood for me; and I came to the market yesterday, for the first time since my son's death, hoping to find some peasant who would fill his place, when chance threw you in my way. I had hoped that he would have outlived me, as I am quickly hastening to the grave, to which I look forward as to the coming of a friend, who would relieve me from those cares which, alas! but increase with my years."

Verezzi compassionately assures her that he will not forsake her, and that it shall not be his fault if she remains in poverty.

The first part of Shelley's narrative shows us one of his favourite devices in composition: a contrast between the darkest and most terrible imaginings of a mind almost in a state of delirium, and the sweet and tender conceits of a childlike and ingenuous nature. The use of such contrasts, sometimes strained but always effective, is one of the most striking features of his genius.

* This episode is borrowed from "Zofloya."

Moreover, a careful attention to the scene of the action is already apparent; a description of nature is mingled with the narrative; the young writer knows when to deduce a moral, evincing a depth of thought very uncommon at his age. After describing the anger of Zastrozzi on learning that his victim has escaped, and his mad pursuit of the fugitive, he brings him before us worn out with hunger, thirst, and fatigue, but thirsting yet more for vengeance, and describes a great forest whose gigantic tree-tops intercept the burning rays of the sun, while the moss-grown slopes beneath invite to repose.

“The sun began to decline; at last it sank beneath the western mountain, and the forest tops were tinged by its departing ray. The shades of night rapidly thickened.

Zastrozzi sat awhile upon the decayed trunk of a scathed oak.

The sky was serene, the blue ether was spangled with countless myriads of stars; the tops of the lofty forest trees waved mournfully in the evening wind; and the moonbeams penetrating at intervals, as they moved, through the matted branches, threw dubious shades upon the dark underwood beneath.

Ugo and Bernardo, conquered by irresistible torpor, sank to rest upon the dewy turf.

A scene so fair, a scene so congenial to those who can reflect upon their past lives with pleasure, and anticipate the future with the enthusiasm of innocence, ill accorded with the ferocious soul of Zastrozzi, which, at one time agitated by revenge, at another by agonising remorse or contending passions, could derive no pleasure from the past—anticipate no happiness in futurity.”

Still pursuing Verezzi, Zastrozzi finds himself on a sudden, and as if by enchantment, in front of a fantastic Gothic palace, which seems to be deserted. He enters with his followers, climbs a wide staircase, and reaches a long corridor, at the end of which is a woman in white draperies who leans on a lamp-lighted balustrade. He recognises Matilda, Contessa di Laurentini.

Just as Zastrozzi is the incarnate fiend of revenge, so is Matilda that of wild and relentless passion. She reveals herself at once, and entreats Zastrozzi to rid her of her hateful rival.

"I almost shudder," exclaimed Matilda, "at the sea of wickedness on which I am about to embark! But still, Verezzi—ah! for him would I even lose my hopes of eternal happiness. In the sweet idea of calling him mine, no scrupulous delicacy, no mistaken superstitious fear, shall prevent me from deserving him by daring acts.—No! I am resolved," continued Matilda, as recollecting his graceful form, her soul was assailed by tenfold love—."

Zastrozzi desires nothing better; the infernal passion of the furious woman will accomplish his vengeance; he departs from Italy while Matilda flies in pursuit of Verezzi.

Careless of modesty and decorum, she wanders solitary at night through the streets of Passau seeking for her beloved.

"A gloomy silence reigned through the streets of the city; it was past midnight, and every inhabitant seemed to be sunk in sleep—sleep which Matilda was almost a stranger to. Her white robes floated on the night air—her shadowy and dishevelled hair flew over her form, which, as she passed the bridge, seemed to strike the boatmen below with the idea of some supernatural and ethereal form."

Attracted by the waters of the Danube, which "reflect her symmetrical form," she is about to drown herself, when the arms of a stranger hold her back. It is Verezzi! Verezzi, whom she recognises after a brief swoon, "bending in anxious solicitude over her elegantly proportioned form."

Verezzi follows Matilda into the mysterious Gothic palace. The coldness and indifference with which he at first listens to her protestations of love, and his unchanging fidelity to Julia, only intensify the Countess's passion. Zastrozzi brings a false

report of Julia's death, and Verezzi falls a prey to fever and delirium, which endanger his life. Meanwhile Zastrozzi and Matilda have frequent interviews, in which Zastrozzi endeavours to uproot every moral and religious feeling from her mind. He puts before her in the crudest terms a system of complete Epicureanism. Matilda readily accepts his theories. "Thy words," she says, "are a balm to my soul." She has but one remaining doubt—on the immortality of the soul.

"Answer me. Do you believe that the soul decays with the body; or if you do not, when this perishable form mingles with its parent earth, where goes the soul which now actuates its movements? Perhaps, it wastes its fervent energies in tasteless apathy or lingering torments."

"Matilda," returned Zastrozzi, "think not so; rather suppose, that by its own innate and energetical exertions this soul must endure for ever, that no fortuitous occurrence, no incidental events, can affect its happiness; but, by daring boldly, by striving to verge from the beaten path, whilst yet trammelled in the chains of mortality, it will gain superior advantages in a future state."

"But religion! Oh, Zastrozzi!"

"I thought thy soul was daring," replied Zastrozzi, "I thought thy mind was towering; and did I then err? . . . Oh, yield not yourself, Matilda, thus to false, foolish, and vulgar prejudices! . . ."

The foregoing passage, one of those, no doubt, taxed by the reviewers with immorality, is important as regards the genesis of the theology and philosophy of the poet. It contains germs of the atheism of Oxford, and the theories of "Queen Mab." If on the one hand Shelley reproves the coarse Epicureanism of Zastrozzi, he has no word of blame for his metaphysical and religious teachings; and Zastrozzi's theory of the immortality of the soul is quite the same as his own at the time. He looked upon immortality as a state of happiness which would be proportioned to the degree of energy and

courage exhibited while on earth. We shall find this theory again in "Hellas."

Meanwhile Verezzi remains a prey to despair, and is near death. A physician declares that a warmer climate is his only chance of life. Matilda proposes that of Venetia, where her castle of Laurentini is situated, amid such fantastic scenery as our poet loves to depict, a mysterious forest, with overhanging granite rocks and foaming cataracts. Thither does Matilda carry her lurid passion, and there she nurses it to the soft breathings of the zephyrs and the murmuring of the pine-trees, or to the mournful music of nuns chanting their requiem for a departed sister in the neighbouring convent. The soft warmth of the climate, the impassioned attentions of Matilda, the heavenly sweetness of her voice when she sings to the accompaniment of her harp, soften and melt Verezzi's heart.

But the irrepressible passion "that beats in Matilda's veins," could not be satisfied with the sweet sympathy of feeling and thought which constitutes the love ideal of Verezzi-Shelley, and which "calms his violent emotions." Thereupon Zastrozzi again comes to her help, and suggests an infallible means of attaining her end, and of for ever effacing the image of Julia in Verezzi's heart. This romantic plan is a feigned attack on Verezzi in the forest; Matilda throws herself before him so as to receive the blow, and is wounded.

Matilda's snowy arm was tinged with purple gore; the wound was painful, the blood streamed fast from her arm and tinged the rock . . . with a purple stain.

The stratagem succeeds to admiration; the sight of Matilda's blood melts the icy heart of Verezzi, and the lovers (still in the forest) swear eternal fidelity. "Love like ours wants not the vain ties of human laws."

This is the first appearance of the doctrine of free love, and of that of the immorality of legal sanctions; a doctrine which the poet was afterwards to practise in his own life, and which formed his most unpardonable offence in the eyes of England.

The crisis occurs at Venice. During an evening fête on the Canal, Verezzi recognises in a gondola, whose "innumerable flambeaux . . . rivalled the meridian sun," the ethereal form of his forgotten Julia.

While he is gazing in an ecstasy Julia's gondola speeds on, and, "indistinct from distance," mocks "his straining eyeball."

Meanwhile, on their return to the little solitary house in which they are dwelling, Matilda succeeds in dispelling the despair which has seized on Verezzi at the sight of Julia.

"And are you then mine—mine for ever?" she rapturously exclaims.

"Oh! I am thine—thine to all eternity," returns Verezzi, as he raises to his lips the cup Matilda has filled for him; but on a sudden the goblet falls from his hands, he seizes his dagger. . . . Julia stands before him! She tries in vain to wrest the dagger from his grasp, he plunges it into his heart and dies.

Matilda, who, until that moment, had preserved a terrible calm, throws herself on Verezzi's breast, draws out the blood-stained poignard, and, seizing the unhappy Julia by the hair as she lies fainting on the ground near the corpse of Verezzi, she stabs her rival in the breast over and over again until not a breath remains. Exhausted by passion, she flings away the weapon, and, with fearful calmness, gazes gloomily on the terrible spectacle. Julia's "head reclined on Verezzi's bosom, and even in death her angelic features were pervaded with a smile of affection."

At this awful moment Matilda's religious fears return to assail her, and restrain her from adding suicide to her crimes.* "And is it for this, for horror, for torments such as these, that He whom monks call All-Merciful has created me?"

In spite of her atheism she trembles at the thought of a future life, and a voice whispers to her soul: "Thou canst never die!"

In contrast with the superstitious terrors of a woman's soul, Shelley now shows us in Zastrozzi the unshaken firmness of true atheism. While Matilda, who has been summoned before the Inquisition, acknowledges, in the presence of approaching death, the falseness of Zastrozzi's arguments, and urges him to join her in repentance, Zastrozzi proudly rejects all religious belief, dies satisfied with having kept his oath, and proclaims, before judges and executioners, the negation of the Divinity.

"I intend," he says, "to meet death, to encounter annihilation, with tranquillity. Am I not convinced of the non-existence of a Deity? Am I not convinced that death will but render this soul more free, more unfettered? Why need I then shudder at death? Why need any one whose mind has risen above the shackles of prejudice, the errors of a false and injurious superstition?"

In "Laon and Cythna," † Laon, face to face with the stake, speaks with more poetry and eloquence; but the thought is the same. One feels that Shelley in his heart applauds the sentiments of Zastrozzi, and admires the martyr to conscience who has for death only "a smile of most disdainful scorn." Zastrozzi is the prototype of Laon and of Prometheus.

In this same year (1809) Shelley was at work

* In "The Cenci" Beatrice in like manner shrinks from suicide for the same reason.

† "Laon and Cythna," Canto XI., Stanzas 15-25.

on a second romance, which was to be brought out in three volumes. "If Jock,"* he gaily writes, "will not give me a devil of a price for my new poem ('The Wandering Jew'), and at least sixty pounds for my romance, the dog shall not have them."

But "the dog" declined, and the novel passed into the hands of Stockdale.† It was published at the author's expense in December, 1810, under the title of "St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian. By a Gentleman of Oxford University." (Shelley had been at Oxford since the end of October.) In spite of the attractiveness of the title, on which the young novelist had reckoned, the book had no success, and the edition was still on the publisher's hands in 1822.

This second novel also was suggested to Shelley by a work of Godwin's called "St. Leon," "which Shelley immensely admired. He read it till he believed that there was truth in alchymy, and the Elixir Vitæ" . . . and he believed also "in the 'Panacea.' He used to cite the opinion of Dr. Franklin," and quote Condorcet on the subject.

The hero of this novel is a fresh incarnation of Shelley himself, still more transparent than the one we have discovered in "Zastrozzi." He is a young and high-souled poet, the heir of a wealthy and powerful German prince, who is separated from his country by an insurmountable barrier, and who lives only for freedom and independence. Wolfstein, such is his name, is under

* John Robinson, publisher of "Zastrozzi."

† This was the beginning of the debt Shelley incurred to his publisher, Stockdale, according to whom it had reached £300 in 1826. Stockdale has given an account of his relations with Shelley in some curious notes, entitled "Stockdale's Budget," which have been very impartially noticed in an article by Mr. Richard Garnett in *Macmillan's Magazine*, "Shelley in Pall Mall," II. p. 100.

the mysterious influence of a kind of magician, the Rosicrucian Ginotti, who is the personification of conscience, and of the fatality of which Wolfstein is the victim.

The action of the story is double and alternate, and would be somewhat difficult to analyse ; there is even less unity and sequence than in "Zastrozzi." We are taken by enchantment from Italy to Switzerland or Bohemia ; the characters appear and disappear like puppets, according to the caprice of the author. Stockdale, after printing the book, discovered rather late that there was no *dénouement*, and that all the heroes of the story, like those in some fantastic ballads, vanish without leaving a trace behind.

The theories first enunciated in "Zastrozzi" are more clearly formulated in "St. Irvyne."

Wolfstein, like Verezzi, loves a noble lady, Megalena di Metastasio, whom he has saved from the hands of Alpine brigands. He takes her to Genoa, and there asks her to become his wife, but without any religious or civil ceremony. Megalena is easily persuaded by the eloquence of her lover.

"Yes," exclaimed Megalena, "yes, prejudice avaunt ! Once more reason takes her seat, and convinces me that to be Wolfstein's is not criminal. . . . Be mine, then, and let our affection end not but with our existence !"

"Never, never shall it end !" enthusiastically exclaimed Wolfstein. "Never ! What can break the bond formed by congeniality of sentiment, cemented by an union of soul which must endure till the intellectual particles which compose it become annihilated ? Oh ! never shall it end ; for when, convulsed by nature's latest ruin, sinks the fabric of this perishable globe ; when the earth is dissolved away and the face of heaven is rolled from before our eyes like a scroll, then will we seek each other, and in eternal, indivisible, although immaterial union shall we exist to all eternity."

As we peruse "St. Irvyne," we cannot help tracing the history of the author written before-

hand in mysterious presentiment. Shelley's life is little more than the realisation of the principal adventures of this strange romance. Like Wolfstein, he, too, is to save a young girl from the prison of school and the prison of home; he is to expound to his chosen bride the metaphysics of free and eternal love, and will lead her to share his sentiments. Like Wolfstein, he is to weary of his first choice, and will seek elsewhere for a worthier object of his love. It almost seems to us that in depicting Wolfstein, he had either a prescience of his own future, or he identified himself by the force of his imagination so entirely with the hero of his creation, that he realised the conception in his own life. He wrote about this time to Godwin, saying: "After being a reader, I am now a writer of novels;" he might have added, "and I am about to live one."

In "St. Irvyne" as in "Zastrozzi" Shelley has contrasted the weakness of a soul terrified by superstition with the fearless serenity of a soul truly enfranchised from all prejudice, and from every religious creed. Ginotti seduces a young orphan girl whose conventual education and superstitious beliefs leave her defenceless before the fascinations of the Rosicrucian. Ginotti's theories on love and marriage are of course the same as Wolfstein's, only he expounds them still more crudely: "Why are we taught to believe that the union of two who love each other is wicked, unless authorised by certain rites and ceremonials which certainly cannot change the tenour of sentiments which it is destined that these two people should entertain for each other?"

To this question Eloise de St. Irvynè ingenuously replies that God has so willed it. Such an answer fills the Rosicrucian with indignation. "Do not you think it an insult to two souls, united

to each other in the irrefragable covenants of love and congeniality, to promise in the sight of a Being whom they know not, that fidelity which is certain otherwise?"

Poor Eloise vainly exclaims: "But I do know that Being, and when I cease to know Him, may I die! I pray to Him every morning and night; I love and adore Him!"

She is overcome by the arguments of Ginotti, and falls.

The unhappy girl, after paying dearly for her weakness, and being infamously deserted by the Rosicrucian, is sheltered by an Irishman, a pattern of humane and chivalrous virtue. He too is another incarnation of Shelley, and like him is under the ban of a father's curse. He may not return to England unless formally married.

How will he act? Like Shelley at a subsequent period, he will marry, but will maintain his theory of marriage.

"I consider it a human institution; I regard it but as a chain for the body, that still leaves the soul unfettered. It is not so with love."

Thus in "St. Irvyne" we find that the philosophical theories of Zastrozzi have become accentuated, and we approach the time when the novelist, having become a poet, will proclaim them under his own name. "Queen Mab" and "Laon and Cythna" are but their poetical development.*

Meanwhile it would appear that Shelley did

* "St. Irvyne" had also its reviewers. The *British Critic* of January, 1811, concludes a brief summary thus:

"Some readers will perhaps be satisfied, and will proceed no farther. They who do, will find the cavern of Gil Blas with very little variation of circumstance, a profusion of words which no dictionary explains, such as *unevasible*, *bandit*, *en-horrored*, descriptions wilder than are to be found in Radcliffe, and a tale more extravagant than the 'St. Leon' of Godwin."

not attain to his definitive convictions without a violent struggle. We see many traces in "St. Irvyne" of the strife in the poet's soul between faith and incredulity, before philosophy won the battle for the god of Lucretius and of Pliny. The pages that record this quasi-confession are marked with so much individuality, with such fervour of emotion, that it is difficult to discern nothing more in them than an exercise in rhetoric. Shelley's originality, besides, is so plainly marked, his intellect and style are so clearly and strongly revealed, that we have no hesitation in quoting the passage as a remarkable specimen of his earliest poetical prose.*

Poetical prose, however, no longer suffices Shelley; one of the curiosities of "St. Irvyne" is the verse scattered throughout its pages. Every character is a poet; Wolfstein, Megalena, Steindolph, a brigand, take it in turns to recite his best compositions when at Eton. The verses no doubt deserve severe criticism on the score of technical perfection when compared even with "Queen Mab," but they are none the less interesting as being the first effusions of what may be called the purely romantic period of Shelley's genius. One of them, indeed, has a peculiar interest, for we find Shelley, for the first time, anxious to emulate the great poet who was destined to become his friend—Lord Byron. "Hours of Idleness" had appeared in 1807. Shelley read the verses, and desired to emulate the young poet whose first appearance in print had so vehemently aroused public attention. Two lines of "Lachin-y-Gair" remained in his memory, and he used them in the piece to which we allude. Shelley could never have imagined that one day he would be taunted with that innocent plagiarism

as a dire offence,* and that the conclusion would be drawn that Byron's "Hours of Idleness" might "be styled the 'horn-book' from which he had acquired the rudiments of the art of poesy."

At a later period, Shelley more than once felt a renewed attraction towards romantic prose. Unfortunately there remain of this only a few sketches and some detached pieces, which excite our regret that the demon of verse did not suffer him to proceed farther. Those exquisite pages are like marvellously sculptured stones, waiting vainly for the master-hand that wrought them, to give them their own place in the building that is for ever suspended.

* "The Real Shelley," I., p. 166.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST POETICAL ESSAYS AND FIRST LOVE— 1809-1810.

DURING the year 1809-1810, the interval between Eton and Oxford that Shelley passed under his father's roof was full of a truly prodigious intellectual activity. He occupied himself with romances and poems, with scientific and experimental studies, with literary and metaphysical correspondence, and, nevertheless, could find leisure for journeys to Oxford and London, for shooting parties, and for endless rambles with his cousin Medwin in the enchanted forest of St. Leonard, where

The adders never styge,
Nor ye nightyngales synge.

During the winter, the two cousins wrote together in alternate chapters the commencement of an extravagant romance, in which a hideous witch played the principal part. The portrait of this witch passed from the prose tale into the verse of the "Wandering Jew," with which they occupied themselves shortly afterwards.

Medwin and Shelley had picked up at a book-stall a fragment of an English translation of the "Wandering Jew," by Christian Shubart.

This fragment, full of a strange and wild eloquence, strongly impressed Shelley. His imagination was haunted by the marvellous legend, and he and his cousin set to work on a metrical romance.

When seven or eight cantos were written, Shelley sent them to Campbell* for his opinion. Campbell returned them with the comment that they contained only two good lines :

It seemed as if an angel's sigh
Had breathed the plaintive symphony.

"This criticism of Campbell's," says Medwin, "gave a death-blow to our hopes of immortality."

Notwithstanding Campbell's adverse verdict, however, the manuscript was sent to Edinburgh to be printed. There it remained until July, 1831, when part of it appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*. Unfortunately that part was written by Medwin, with the exception of a song at the end of the fourth Canto, which Medwin says is Shelley's, and "extremely musical" :

See, yon opening rose
Spreads its fragrance to the gale !
It fades within an hour ;
Its decay is fast—is pale.
Paler is yon maiden,
Faster is her heart's decay ;
Deep with sorrow laden,
She sinks in death—away.

But though Shelley's "Wandering Jew" no longer exists, we can judge by his frequent use of the legend in his poems how strongly it had taken hold of his imagination. We meet with it repeatedly in his works ; in "Alastor," in "Hellas," and especially in "Queen Mab." † According to Medwin, the episode of Ahasuerus

* Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), author of "The Pleasures of Hope" and of "The Last Man."

† Vol. I., p. 57, *et seq.* See also "Alastor."

in the latter is only slightly altered from the original "Wandering Jew."

This legend of the wandering Jew, the victim of the Galilean's vengeance; another Prometheus persecuted by another Jupiter; this unmoved witness of the succession of religions and human institutions, besides being a piteous and terrible story, presented an admirable framework for the development of Shelley's favourite theme of the struggle between good and evil in the world, and the successive victories and defeats of the spirit of liberty and love among mankind. He preceded in this the French philosopher-poet, Edgar Quinet, who was inspired by the same spirit and is certainly akin to him, and whose "Ahasuerus" and "Prométhée" have been too much neglected. Some other poems written by Shelley at the same period appeared in a volume entitled "Original Poems" by Victor and Cazire, published at Horsham in 1810. The edition, consisting of fourteen hundred and eighty copies of a volume containing sixty-four pages, had a curious fate, and has so entirely disappeared that the most eager search on the part of enthusiastic Shelleyans has failed to discover a trace of it. A week after its publication, when about a hundred copies were in circulation, the publisher discovered that this collection of "original poetry" contained a transcript from the pages of M. G. Lewis, the celebrated author of "The Monk." He immediately complained to Shelley, who, writes Stockdale, "with all the ardour incidental to his character, which embraced youthful honour in all its brilliancy, expressed the warmest resentment at the imposition practised upon him by his coadjutor, and entreated me to destroy all the copies." *

* This volume, too, found reviewers. Articles were written on it both in the *Poetical Register of Fugitive Poetry*

In 1808 Medwin had met a young girl in North Wales who was destined to make a mark in English poetry—Felicia Dorothea Browne, afterwards Mrs. Hemans.* The girl-author, then in her sixteenth year, had just brought out two volumes of verse, "Early Blossoms," and "England and Spain; or, Valour and Patriotism."

"It was impossible," says Medwin, "not to be struck with the beauty (for beautiful she was), the grace, and charming simplicity and *naïveté* of this interesting girl, and on my return from Denbighshire, I made her and her works the frequent subject of conversation with Shelley. Her juvenile productions, remarkable certainly for her age—and some of those which the volume contained were written when she was a mere child—made a powerful impression on Shelley, ever enthusiastic in his admiration of talent; and with a prophetic spirit he foresaw the coming greatness of that genius, which under the name of Hemans afterwards electrified the world. He desired to become acquainted with the young authoress, and using my name, wrote to her,

for 1810–1811, and in the *British Critic* for 1811. The first deploras the waste of paper by the two authors of this *down-right scribble*; the second, while praising the type, and after quoting some of Cazire's verses, thus sums up the collection: "It consists of sentimental verses without either rhyme or reason, and of horrifying tales that are perfectly absurd." These reviews have been discovered recently by Mr. Edward Dowden, who is the author of a most interesting article on Shelley's early writings in the *Contemporary Review* for September, 1844. He conjectures, with some probability, that the name of Cazire, although the sound is feminine, may only be a disguise for that of Edward Graham, who was at that time a close friend of Shelley's, and an ardent sympathiser in his literary pursuits. Young Graham was the son of a French *émigré* of high family who had sought safety in England, where he had married a lady, a direct descendant of Shakespeare. He was a clever musician and a pupil of the celebrated Woelfi, and had been taken into his house by Shelley's father and brought up by him.

* 1794–1835. Mrs. Hemans was principally a descriptive poet. She was essentially feminine in style, and was in consequence a favourite writer with women. Gentle, tender, and melancholy, she might have taken a place among the best lyric-writers of England had she written less.

as he was in the habit of doing to all those who in any way excited his sympathies. This letter produced an answer, and a correspondence of some length passed between them, which of course I never saw, but it is to be supposed that it turned on other subjects besides poetry ; I mean, that it was sceptical. It has been said by her biographer, that the poetess was at one period of her life, as is the case frequently with deep thinkers on religion, inclined to doubt ; and it is not impossible that such owed its origin to this interchange of thought. One may indeed suppose this to have been the case, from the circumstance of her mother writing to my father, and begging him to use his influence with Shelley to cease from any further communication with her daughter—in fact, prohibiting their further correspondence. Mrs. Hemans seems, however, to have been a great admirer of his poetry, and to have in some measure modelled her style after his, particularly in her last and most finished effusions, in which we occasionally find a line or two of Shelley's, proving that she was an attentive reader of his works. "Poets," as Shelley says, "the best of them, are a very chameleonic race, and take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves over which they pass."

Shelley no longer spoke of Mrs. Hemans ; her rose-water lyrics must have seemed to him very vapid and colourless ; the author of "Early Blossoms" had learned but little from her teacher, for in her "Sceptic" Mrs. Hemans repudiated any leaning towards the Satanic School of Poetry. Shelley probably estimated her as did Lord Byron, who in 1820 wrote : "Mrs. Hemans is a poet, but too stilted and too much given to apostrophising."

Shelley's strong convictions were henceforth combined with a passionate ardour for prose-lytism. Women, as being nearer to Nature, seemed to him to offer the fairest field for the sowing of the New Gospel.* He had begun by

* Helen Shelley relates in one of her letters that her brother "had a wish to educate some child. A little acrobat who came to the back-door to display her wonderful feats, attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose."

exercising his apostolate on his sisters; to them succeeded Felicia Browne, next his cousin, Harriet Grove, and shortly afterwards Harriet Westbrook, his future wife.

Love itself was to him only a means of intellectual conquest and philosophical propagandism.

It may be asked whether Shelley was ever beguiled by mere passion, by *Venus Pandemos*, as he called it, and whether he suffered by the deplorable experience to which Thornton Hunt, one of his biographers, alludes: "Accident has made me aware of facts which give me to understand that in passing through the usual curriculum of a college life in all its paths Shelley did not go scatheless; but that in tampering with venal pleasures his health was seriously and not transiently injured. The effect was far greater on his mind than on his body."

If we admit on this uncorroborated statement of Thornton Hunt that such a misfortune did happen to Shelley, the only effect it produced was to disgust him for ever with every kind of vice, and to confirm him in the pure manner of life that even his most inveterate detractors, including Mr. Jeaffreson himself, are obliged to admit.

Prostitution was always the object of Shelley's most violent denunciation. To him it was the hateful but necessary consequence of the deviation from natural love which results from the dogmas of religion and the conventions of society, the necessary equipoise of legal prostitution, the *sine quâ non* of chastity, that virtue of people who are cheaply virtuous.

Chastity is "a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality."* There was but one remedy, he thought, for this hideous evil: a

* Notes on "Queen Mab." See also a strong passage in "Peter Bell the Third."

return to pure love, to the laws of natural and free love.

The great characteristic of Shelley's theories on love (and we must bear in mind that his theories were the sole law of his conduct) was the grand principle, that in the human heart the ideal of love is inseparable from the ideal of intellect; his great quest, even at an age when the spiritual vision is ordinarily obscured by the passions, was a female soul in harmony with all the transcendent aspirations of his own, a soul which, both in intellect and heart, nay, even in action if necessary, could join in his apostolate of morality and humanity; in one word, like Balzac, he sought for a "true believer." But he always sought vainly for such a soul among the living women whom he loved.

And some were fair—but beauty dies away ;
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray.

It is probably among the latter that he placed Harriet Grove, his first love. Medwin has left us a charming sketch of this young cousin of Shelley's :

She was born, I think, in the same year as himself. She was like him in lineaments—her eyes, her hair, her features, they said were like to his, but softened all and tempered into beauty. When I think of Miss Grove, and call to mind all the women I have ever seen, I know of none that surpassed or could even compete with her. She was like one of Shakespeare's women, like some Madonna of Raffaele's.

The cousins had not met since their early childhood until the summer of 1810. They then spent two months together; a mutual passion sprang up, and its unfortunate sequel was the first love-wound Shelley received.* Shelley initiated

* Charles Henry Grove, Harriet's brother, gives the following recollections of the period, in a letter dated 16th February, 1857 :

"I did not meet Bysshe again until I was fifteen years old, when I left the navy, and paid a visit to Field Place,

her into his studies, and it has even been asserted that she wrote some chapters of "Zastrozzi."

A correspondence began between them; but Harriet soon took alarm at the tone of Shelley's letters, which treated of speculative subjects and endeavoured to shake her religious opinions; she consulted her parents, who, recognising a serious danger for their daughter in the correspondence, put an immediate end to it, and relinquished their hopes of a union between the young cousins.

It is greatly to be regretted that none of these letters of Shelley to his cousin are now in existence, nor yet any of those to Felicia Browne.* It would be curious to observe the art with which this new Abelard mingled love-talk with his discussions on philosophy and theology. On this occasion too his letters spoiled everything, and his beautiful cold-hearted cousin, forgetting the hopes she had allowed Shelley to cherish, married a wealthy Somersetshire squire in November, 1811. Bysshe suffered acutely from what he considered her infidelity. He felt justified in twice describing the cousin he had loved too well as false or untrue:

One whom I found was dear but false to me ;
The other's heart was like a heart of stone.

with my father and mother, Charlotte and Harriet. Bysshe had just left Eton, and was at home with his sister Elizabeth. He was at this time more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irvings (the 'St. Irvyne' of the novel). After our visit to Field Place, we went to my father's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where we passed a very happy month. Bysshe was full of life and ardour, and delighted with his successful wooing of my sister."

* In a letter to Hogg, Shelley protests he had no other end in view in his letters to his cousin than to discover

As Shelley's love had been passionate and profound, so the wound was deep and slow to heal. In his letters to Hogg during the Oxford vacation we catch an echo of his agony. With anguish in his soul he describes the fatal steps leading to the catastrophe.

In a letter dated Field Place, Dec. 23, 1810, he tells Hogg how his sister sometimes attempted to plead his cause with her cousin, who replied in a discreet and reasonable fashion not indicative of very vivid affection:

"Even supposing I take your representation of your brother's qualities and sentiments—which, as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although *you* may not be aware of the exaggeration—what right have *I*, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy which must end in delusive disappointment when he finds how really inferior I am to the being which his heated imagination has painted?"

Dec. 26, 1810: "Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible; whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind which told her *not* to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment."

Jan. 3, 1811: "She is no longer mine! She abhors me as a sceptic—as what *she* was before!"

Jan. 11, 1811: "She is gone! She is lost to me for ever! She is married—married to a clod of earth; she will become as insensible herself. All those fine capabilities will moulder!"

For a moment Shelley even contemplated suicide.

At a subsequent period, when the wound was quite healed, he would recall, not without pleasure, that first unfolding of a love from which disenchanting reality had never effaced the bloom, and which remained in his heart as a scarcely unclosed bud, all untouched by the warmth of a summer sun. He must have been thinking

whether their ideas coincided sufficiently for them to think seriously of a closer and lasting union.

of his fondly loved cousin in 1819, when he penned the following lines :

And where is truth ? On tombs ? For such to thee
Has been my heart ; and thy dead memory
Has lain from childhood, many a weary year,
Unchangingly preserved and buried there.

In a fragment that has come down to us of his studies preparatory to the composition of his "*Epipsychidion*," he depicted the two cousins under the Italian names of Cosimo and Fiordispina :

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had razed their love, which could not be
But in dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together, like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in the purple prime.

But until these hours of serene reminiscence had struck, he felt bitterly the void left by what he calls the betrayal of his beloved cousin, and laments in heart-broken verse his desertion and his loneliness :

THE SOLITARY.

Dar'st thou amid the varied multitude
To live alone, an isolated thing ?
To see the busy beings round thee spring,
And care for none ; in thy calm solitude,
A flower that scarce breathes in the desert rude
To Zephyr's passing wing ?

Not the swart Pariah in some Indian grove,
Lone, lean, and hunted by his brother's hate
Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate
As that poor wretch who cannot, cannot love.
He bears a load which nothing can remove—
A killing, withering weight.

He smiles—'tis sorrow's deadliest mockery ;
He speaks—the cold words flow not from his soul,
He acts like others, drains the genial bowl
Yet, yet he longs—although he fears—to die.
He pants to reach what yet he seems to fly,
Dull life's extremest goal.

In this appalling solitude he beholds Death approaching, and offering him love and eternal rest beyond the grave :

Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there ;
But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair.
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath
Dares dispute with grim silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me ?

Naught waits for the good but a Spirit of Love
That will hail their blessed advent to regions above ;
For Love, mortal, gleams through the gloom of my sway,
And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
Hast thou loved ? Then depart from these regions of hate
And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of Fate.
I offer a calm habitation to thee—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me ?

To this reiterated call from Death the poet replies :

Oh, sweet is thy slumber ! oh, sweet is the ray
Which, after thy night, introduces the day !

I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall ;
And duty forbids, though I languish to die,
When departure might heave virtue's breast with a sigh.
O Death ! O my friend ! snatch this form to thy shrine,
And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine ! *

The serene pleasures of friendship were at that juncture, and frequently afterwards, a consolation to Shelley for the disappointments and sufferings of love.

* "Death : A Dialogue," 1810. The friend whose affection wins back the poet to life, and whom Shelley identifies with *Virtue* herself, was Hogg, who will soon appear in our pages.

CHAPTER V.

SHELLEY AT OXFORD—"NECESSITY OF ATHEISM" —1810-1811.

"OXFORD," says Leigh Hunt, "has not always appreciated the favours of the gods. Oxford repudiated Locke, estranged Gibbon, expelled Shelley!"

Nevertheless, when Shelley entered Oxford, the University was nominally Liberal.

Oxford was still ringing with the eloquent accents of Coppleston, the Professor of Poetry and the bold champion of his University against the attacks of the Edinburgh Reviewers, who accused her, not without reason, of representing the monastic routine of the Middle Ages in her educational system.

But we should err in complaining of Oxford's intolerance towards Shelley; we might say of it what St. Augustine says of original sin, "*Felix culpa!*" for without it we might have had neither "*Laon and Cythna*," nor "*Prometheus Unbound*."

"At the commencement of Michaelmas Term," says Hogg, "that is at the end of October, in the year 1810,* I happened one day to sit next

* Shelley had matriculated at University College on April 10th, 1810, returning afterwards to Eton, where he remained until the end of July.

to a freshman at dinner ; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent."

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley's fellow-student at Oxford, and expelled thence with him, his inseparable friend and his biographer, was too closely associated with Shelley's life for us to omit a sketch of his remarkable character. He has frequently been depicted for us as the Mephistopheles of another Faust, a kind of demon incarnate playing with the young poet as the cat plays with the mouse. There is some exaggeration in this picture ; in order to appreciate Hogg's influence over Shelley at its true worth, we need only bear in mind that on leaving Eton the latter had already formed very decided opinions on all the great questions of philosophy and religion, and had resolved on a line of moral conduct from which nothing could have induced him thenceforth to deviate.

That Hogg and Shelley should have been mutually attracted by their very diversity is natural enough, but there were on the other hand sufficient points of contact between the man of the world, the Tory sceptic, and the Republican, the confirmed idealist, to explain their sympathy and reciprocal regard. Without taking into account the moral qualities which they shared in common, their thirst for knowledge, their love of philosophic research and literary study, a burning desire to write and to appear in print was sufficient to cause intimacy between two young men, whose maturity of mind and purity of life placed them apart from the common crowd of students. At that period Hogg had not become the positive and cynical character described by Trelawney in his "Records," despising

poetry and imagination, and caring for no other study than that of law. In the early years of his intimacy with the poet, Hogg was a fervent adept in purely literary study, and was as deeply devoted to Plato and the Greek tragedians as to Blackstone or Coke. Mr. Dowden* has conclusively proved that his leanings to the romantic were much more pronounced than his biography of Shelley would lead us to suppose.

He wrote both verses and novels. At Oxford he competed for the poetry prize, the subject being "The Dying Gladiator." He also collaborated with Shelley in the composition of "Leonora," a fiction founded on a pathetic incident in real life, and of which a considerable part was in type, when the expulsion of the friends from Oxford alarmed the printer and put a stop to the work. In 1813 he published a philosophical novel much admired by Shelley, who discerned in it the highest gifts of a novelist and a poet.

Mr. Rossetti, in our opinion, has admirably described Hogg and his book:

"This gentleman," he says, "belonged to a family of high Tories† living at Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees, and was destined for the conveyancing branch of the law. . . . We can trace in his book the character of a robust *bon-vivant* and man of society, with a great contempt for bores and crotchet-mongers of all sorts, and a generally sardonic or

* *Contemporary Review*, September, 1884.

† With his accustomed lightness, occasionally carried to cynicism, Hogg speaks of his own family in regard to their politics and religion in the following terms: "As to my own family and my immediate connections, we were all persons whose first toast after dinner was, invariably, 'Church and State!'—warm partisans of William Pitt, of the highest Church, and of the high Tory party; consequently we were anything but intolerant—we were above suspicion, above ordinances. . . . My relatives felt that they had margin enough—plenty of sea-room; that whatever might be said or done, their good principles could not be doubted. . . . If the 'Age

cynical turn, the antipodes of anything 'gushing' or any revolutionary idealism, tempered, however, by a deep respect for the forms and monuments of intellect consecrated by experience. That an acute mind of this calibre should at once have accepted Shelley as a beautiful soul and heaven-born genius, and should have been inspired with a warm enthusiasm for him, such as neither radical divergences of view, nor early and final separation . . . could avail to bedim, speaks as strongly as anything for the poet's intellectual and personal fascination. . . . The aroma of personal knowledge and affection, along with the keen zest of a *raconteur* who enjoys every oddity and reinforces it in the telling, impart a peculiar charm to these Oxford reminiscences—and indeed, spite of its many flaws and perversities, to the whole 'Life,' the suppression of whose concluding portion defrauds the admirers of Shelley of their just perquisites."

For our own part, we join in Mr. Rossetti's regret; in reading Hogg we have enjoyed the humour of which he speaks, and we regret that the limits of our work do not allow us to quote more largely from him. We can understand what an attraction his original, disdainful, and exclusive intellect, his strong mind, his adamant patience, as Peacocke says, must have had upon Shelley, who has given, in a letter to Mary Gisborne, an incisive and witty sketch of the discreet yet keen sceptic and fine scholar:

You will see Hogg; and I cannot express
His virtues (though I know that they are great)
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep.

of Reason' (Paine's) had been republished by myself, or one of my earliest friends, the world would have supposed that it was put forth merely to show the utter futility, and impotence, and vanity of the author's arguments." The above gives a painful impression of the sincerity and earnestness of the religious and political convictions of the Tories of those days.

To return to Oxford and the commons table, where Hogg and Shelley conversed together like old acquaintances, and entered that same evening on a friendship which in spite of occasional clouds remained warm, devoted, and unchangeable to the last. A conversation on the respective merits of German and Italian poetry, begun at table, was continued in Hogg's rooms, whither he invited the freshman to come for wine. Shelley, finding himself in company with a cultivated and kindly spirit, threw off his reserve and soon led the talk to his favourite topic of natural science.

"As I felt in truth," continues Hogg, "but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall (nearly five feet eleven), but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature.* His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he

* De Quincey, in sketching a portrait of Shelley, relates that he remembers having seen in London a pen-and-ink likeness of the poet in his Oxford gown; the sketch exactly corresponded with a verbal description he had once heard, that "he looked like an elegant and slender flower, whose head drooped from being surcharged with rain."

Besides the portrait mentioned by De Quincey, four others are known to have been taken: an engraving of Shelley as a child, from a drawing attributed to the Duc de Montpensier, and published by Colnaghi in 1879; an oil painting by Miss Curran, an enthusiastic admirer of the poet, in 1818-19, and now in the possession of Sir Percy Shelley, his son; a water-colour by his friend Williams, that has now unfortunately disappeared; and lastly, a portrait in oils, painted after death by Clint, from Miss Curran's portrait, aided by the recollections of Mrs. Shelley and her friend Mrs. Williams, "a portrait," says Trelawney, "that those who knew Shelley in the last year of his life

was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were in fact unusually small ; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical* (the mouth perhaps excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual ; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterises the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls) of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognised the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it."

thought very like him." An engraving of the latter forms our frontispiece. Mr. Jeaffreson has followed what he calls the Shelley legend even to these portraits. He devotes ten pages to proving that not one of them is a faithful likeness of the poet, because in all of them the most distinctive feature of his face is absent—his little turned-up nose, as Mr. Jeaffreson expresses it. He cannot sufficiently sneer at the unpoetical little nose, and at the touching weakness of two women, the widow and the friend, idealising their recollections in this posthumous portrait, "and being especially desirous, that on the historic canvas he should be endowed with a nose wholly unlike the one that had been, in their eyes, the great blemish of his earthly tabernacle." Instead of his ten pages of burlesque, Mr. Jeaffreson would have done better to reproduce for us a bust of Shelley of which he speaks as still existent, and as "protesting, dumbly eloquent, against the unfaithfulness of the portraits."

* Shelley himself makes fun in his letters of what he calls "a little turn-up nose."

The first meeting of these two essentially different minds, mutually attractive by their very contrast, was decisive. Hogg and Shelley could not thenceforth exist apart; they were called the inseparables.

After spending the morning in private study, Hogg habitually repaired to Shelley's room, and they frequently remained together until a late hour of the night.

If the weather were bad, they read, wrote, and conversed indoors. Their favourite studies were "Locke on the Human Understanding," Hume's "Essays," the "Dialogues" of Plato in Madame Dacier's French translation, books on logic, and the Greek, Latin, and English poets.

"The devotion, the reverence, the religion with which he was kindled towards all the masters of intellect," declares Hogg, "cannot be described. The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe, the apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm, nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached for the first time a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity; his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. . . .

"He was to be found book in hand at all hours; reading in season and out of season, at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only at Oxford, in the public walks and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility. . . .

"I have never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm that out of the twenty-four hours he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford his diligence

was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards. Few were aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had in truth read more Greek than many an aged pedant who, with pompous parade, prides himself on this study alone. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straight forward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish; and by changing the position of the words, and occasionally substituting others, he would transmute several sentences from prose to verse, to heroic or more commonly elegiac verse . . . with surprising rapidity and readiness."

In fine weather they took long walks, dining together afterwards in Shelley's rooms. They thus made acquaintance with the beautiful country round Oxford—Shotover Hill, Bagley Wood, the banks of the Thames, the hills, meadows, and woods—wandering into farms where on one occasion the poet was attacked by a ferocious dog, who tore off the skirts of his brand-new blue coat; or springing over a ruined wall into an admirably kept garden where there was no foliage save the dark leaves of evergreens, where scarcely a single wan, autumnal flower lingered and languished; a garden that was nevertheless symmetrically arranged and scrupulously neat, and which spoke of peace and solitude, and the ministering presence of gentle human hands. Shelley loved to wander in that enchanting spot, and one day on leaving it he could not refrain from speaking to Hogg of its sacred peace, which no doubt, said he, owed its attraction to the presence of some good and beautiful woman. The beautiful woman dreamed of by Shelley is to become the Enchantress of the garden he describes in one of his most exquisite poems, "The Sensitive Plant."

In the course of these long rambles, Shelley, to Hogg's great anxiety, would frequently amuse himself by two favourite pastimes, pistol-shooting

and sailing paper boats. He gave up the former out of regard for Hogg.

He particularly liked lingering on the banks of Shotover Pond, and night would sometimes overtake him, either repeating verses aloud, or in discussions with his friend on themes that had no connection with surrounding objects.

In the correct and official atmosphere of Oxford, so original and refined a nature must of necessity have appeared strange and eccentric. Mr. Jeaffreson abounds with stories of the poet's eccentricities. His Byronic collars, turned down over a blue coat with glittering buttons; his long and bushy hair under the "little round hat upon his little round head;" his habit of reading or disputing aloud in the High Street or public places of Oxford, were sources of amusement to his fellow students. But we seek in vain for any authority to warrant the conclusion of his biographer that those eccentricities were intended to attract notice and to display his superiority. Hogg relates a charming anecdote which to Mr. Jeaffreson seems conclusive, but is in fact an admirable picture of Shelley at a time when he was deeply interested in discussing philosophy with his friend, particularly the Platonic theory of the pre-existence of souls.

"One morning," writes Hogg, "we had been reading Plato together. . . . In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. . . . 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he asked in a piercing voice and with a wistful look. The mother made no answer. . . . 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he repeated with unabated earnestness. 'He cannot speak, sir,' said the mother seriously. 'Worse and worse,' cried Shelley; . . . 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy, perhaps, that he cannot; but it is only a silly whim. He cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.' 'It is not for me to dispute with you, gentle-

men,' the woman meekly replied; . . . 'but I can safely declare I never heard him speak, nor any child of his age.' . . . Shelley pressed the boy's fat cheek with his fingers. . . . Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on. 'How provokingly close are those new-born babes!' he ejaculated; 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge is reminiscence. The doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention.'

There was a certain audacity at that epoch in liking Plato at Oxford, and in saying so. The teaching of the schools under the name of Aristotle was held in honour exclusively, and Aldrich's* *Manual* contained pretty well all the philosophy that was taught at the University. Shelley's aversion from a system of pedantic logic, and arid schooling that allowed neither liberty to thought nor free sway to the imagination, may be conceived. Those professors, blindly following in the track of the Middle Ages, seemed to him ghosts from another world—"very dull people."

He was sent for one morning by one of the tutors, who wanted to talk to him about his studies. He gives the following account of the interview to his friend Hogg:

A little man sent for me this morning, and told me in an almost inaudible whisper that I must read.

"You must read, you must read," he repeated in his small voice. I answered that I had no objection. He persisted; so, to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not exactly what he meant. "You must read '*Prometheus Vincit*,' and Demosthenes' '*De Corona*,' and Euclid." 'Must I read Euclid?' I asked sorrowfully. "Yes, certainly; and when you have read the Greek works I have

* See an amusing allusion to the *Manual* in Shelley's satire, "Peter Bell the Third."

mentioned, you must begin Aristotle's 'Ethics,' and then you may go on to his other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well acquainted with Aristotle." This he repeated so often that I was quite tired, and at last I said, "Must I care about Aristotle? What if I do not mind Aristotle?" . . . and I left him in great perplexity.

What would the poor tutor have said could he have guessed that not only did his pupil love and read Plato, but that he wrote revolutionary verses in behalf of "the dearest interests of universal happiness," in which he wedded the spirits of Ravailac and Charlotte Corday, and composed an epithalamium for that mystical marriage, which ends as follows :

But what is sweeter to Revenge's ear
Than the fell tyrant's last expiring yell?
Yes; than love's sweetest blisses 'tis more dear
To drink the floatings of a despot's knell.

This wild and incoherent rhapsody bore the following title of Hogg's invention : "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson."

Peg Nicholson, a mad washerwoman, had attempted to stab King George III. with a carving-knife. The episode has long been forgotten ; but at that time it was fresh in every one's memory. The poor woman was still alive in Bedlam ; "but since her existence must be uncomfortable, there could be no harm in putting her to death, and in creating a nephew and administrator to be the editor of his aunt's poetical works."

Chatterton, one of Shelley's great favourites just then, had set the fashion of such literary mystifications by his pseudo-Rowley.

The pseudo-Nicholson, if we may believe Hogg and Shelley himself,* had a great success, first with Munday the publisher, who agreed to bring out

* Shelley writes to Graham, Nov. 30, 1810 : "It sells wonderfully here, and is become the fashionable subject of discussion."

the volume at his own expense, and did it well, and next with the public :

We used to meet gownsmen in High Street reading the goodly volume as they walked—pensive, with a grave and sage delight—some of them, perhaps, more pensive, because it seemed to portend the instant overthrow of all royalty, from a king to a court-card. It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion of a choice spirit. Nobody suspected or could suspect who was the author ; the thing passed off as the genuine production of the would-be regicide. What a strange delusion to admire our stuff, the concentrated essence of nonsense !

Amid all this declamatory trash, this deluge of romantic and revolutionary effusions, there are, nevertheless, some pieces not lacking in delicate beauty and a certain Shelleyan aroma ; one of these will be found in Appendix II., "Melody to a Scene of Former Times."

It is impossible to repress a smile when we remember that the same public who were rapturous over the *Posthumous Fragments*, afterwards disdainfully refused to glance at Shelley's "*Prometheus Unbound*," or his "*Adonais*."*

Love-confidences were mingled with literary and metaphysical discussions. Shelley liked to tell his friend of the beauty and perfection of his cousin. From the cousin the conversation passed to his eldest sister, Elizabeth, whose letters, interspersed with verse, were so charming. Out of friendship for Hogg, Shelley wished to influence his sister in favour of the man he judged most worthy of her ; he invited him to spend the vacation at Field Place in order that he might see

* Hogg's testimony must not be taken too literally. Mr. Dowden exonerates the literary public of Oxford from such want of discernment by quoting from Mr. Slatter, of the publishing firm of Munday & Slatter, who describes the "*Posthumous Fragments*" as "a work almost still-born."

her, win her heart, and make her his wife. It was a keen disappointment to Shelley that the project failed.

Immediately on reaching Field Place for the Christmas holidays in 1810, he writes to his friend Hogg:

Stockdale has behaved infamously to me; he has abused the confidence I reposed in him in sending him my work,* and he has made very free with your character, of which he knows nothing, with my father.

Stockdale, who was no doubt quite as anxious to recover from Shelley's father the amount he had expended on publishing "*St. Irvyne*" as he was alarmed at the infidel tendencies of the young author, had communicated with Mr. Shelley in order to warn him against his son's danger and the influence of that son's friend.

Mr. Shelley was already greatly incensed against his son by reason of the complaints of Miss Grove's relations; he discerned in the Oxford undergraduate an apostle of infidelity and impiety, and trembled for his own daughters. Remonstrances from father and mother were showered on Shelley; correspondence with his cousin was prohibited; he was forbidden to print anything more; there was even an intention of removing him from Oxford.

"I am now," he wrote to Hogg, "surrounded, environed by dangers, to which compared the devils who besieged St. Anthony were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles; I am reckoned an outcast; yet I defy them and laugh at their ineffectual efforts. . . . My father wished to withdraw me from college; I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest, but I stand as it were on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below."

* Probably a philosophical "*Dialogue*," in which Shelley set forth his moral and religious theories.

These domestic altercations served but to embitter his mind, and to increase his hatred of religious intolerance. So soon as he had overcome the first feelings of despondency, he accepted the combat, and strong in the purity of his intentions and the sincerity of his convictions, he took an oath, on what he called *the altar of perjured love*, the oath of Hannibal, to wage war to the death against the religious fanaticism that was the cause of all his suffering.

I think it is to the benefit of society to destroy the opinions which can annihilate the dearest of its ties. . . . It is now that I stand in need of all my art ; they drive me to have recourse to cunning.

Yet here I swear—and as I break my oaths may Infinity, Eternity blast me—here I swear that never will I forgive intolerance ! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge ; every moment shall be devoted to that object, it shall be a lasting, a long revenge ! Oh, how I wish I were the avenger—that it were mine to crush the demon, to hurl him to his native hell never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration !

Under circumstances such as these, when Hogg was denounced to Shelley's father as the evil genius of his son, it was difficult to set about realising the Oxford dreams. Yet Shelley continued to encourage his friend's hopes of making Elizabeth Shelley his wife ; sending him some verses she had written on the bombardment of Copenhagen, reading to Elizabeth, Hogg's letters and Hogg's verses in which he compares Shelley to an oak, and his faithless cousin to the ivy that destroys the tree ; while Hogg almost engages himself by a solemn promise. Shelley writes to him gratefully :

How can I find words to express my thanks for such generous conduct with regard to my sister, with talents and attainments such as you possess, to promise what I ought

not perhaps to have required, what nothing but a dear sister's intellectual improvement could have induced me to demand?

Towards the close of the vacation, however, Shelley's father became somewhat appeased, and in the middle of January, 1811, he condescended to argue with the youthful theologian, and confer with him as to the evidences of Christianity. It was even agreed that at Easter the terrible Hogg, so vilified by the Pall Mall publisher, should be received at Field Place.

On his return to Oxford at the beginning of 1811, Shelley resumed his old manner of life with Hogg; the prospect of a possible union between Hogg and Elizabeth drawing them still closer together. They renewed with delight their former habits of intimacy, their long vigils of study, their rambles, their reading of all sorts, their endless arguments. In order to please his father, Shelley had promised to compete for the Newdigate Prize, the subject being the Parthenon. Mr. Shelley, delighted with his son's excellent frame of mind, called upon a friend, the Rev. Edward Dollaway, a learned antiquary, begging him to assist the young poet with his erudition. The antiquary on this wrote Shelley a long letter, enclosing him a collection of maps, notes, and documents; but the poem was never finished. A thunderbolt put a sudden end to Shelley's life at Oxford, and crushed all the hopes and plans of his father.

On matriculating at Oxford, Shelley had undertaken to respect the University Religious Tests, had subscribed to the Thirty-nine Articles, and, as Mr. Jeaffreson says, was bound to prove himself in communion with the Church of England, by receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on certain days in his college chapel.

It is interesting to learn what was the religious

system at Oxford in 1810. Mr. Jcaffreson is sufficiently explicit on this point:

In respect to this last particular, it was usual for the academic "dons" to have regard for the religious scruples of the undergraduates, whose consciousness of evil living made them feel they would be guilty of presumption in coming to the Lord's table. On going to the Dean of his College, or his tutor, and making confession of his unfitness to communicate, the undergraduate of light manners and tender conscience received permission to be absent from the approaching celebration, on the understanding that he made a suitable contribution to the alms gathered on the occasion for charitable uses. In most colleges it was understood that the undergraduate who thus avoided the communion should give a guinea to the offertory; a requirement to which the applicant for dispensation could not object on conscientious grounds. Hence the usage which in course of time gave occasion for the statement that the dispensation was *bought* for a guinea, and the still more perverse statement that undergraduates took the Sacrament at the University, *in order* to escape the exaction of twenty-one shillings.

It is easy to guess what Shelley must have thought of such a performance. He could pass judgment on it without having read Mary Wollstonecraft's remarks on the defective discipline and morality of our national seminaries, in her "Vindication of the Rights of Women": "What good can be expected from the youth who receives the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to avoid forfeiting a guinea, which he probably afterwards spends in some sensual manner?"

Shelley accepted the Lord's Supper, as he had accepted the Thirty-nine Articles, from necessity; as a philosopher, he could only laugh at it.

Openly to attack these puerile institutions would have been to court destruction; his aims were more Machiavellian. As he wrote to Hogg: "It is now that I stand in need of all my art; I am driven to have recourse to cunning." It seemed to him that the only road to success in his

enterprise against religion was to arouse public opinion, to stir and fashion it, and yet not to expose himself to defeat by self-betrayal before the battle. To this end it was well to air his opinions, to disseminate them among the literary and intelligent, and to dispel torpor by direct appeals to controversy. He had practised this method, learned from Dr. Lind, at Eton, by addressing inquiries on scientific subjects to learned men, and there was now no danger of incurring a flogging from Dr. Keate, with which one of his Eton correspondents had threatened him. He would take efficient means to avoid detection this time. He experienced a secret pleasure in the thought that the mysterious blows which could not fail to hit their object, "l'Infame," would be struck from the very sanctuary of its most fervent worshippers; he desired to effect on a smaller scale that which Voltaire had, with greater advantages and less ingenuity, effected on a larger, and in a country far readier than England, the stronghold of cant, to accept even from an anonymous hand the daring doctrines of free thought, and the revolutionary teachings of philosophy.

He entered, therefore, on the warfare, writing under various pseudonyms, even feminine names, to prelates, clergymen, and theologians, who took their correspondent for an unbeliever, or at least a sceptic. Medwin, who passed through Oxford just then, found Shelley absorbed and delighted by the incidents of these theological mystifications.

But personal correspondence was found to be too restricted. Unless his arguments were to be allowed to degenerate into barren discussions, a starting-point and programme setting forth the grounds of the whole question became a necessity. Shelley, therefore, collaborated with

Hogg, and brought out his pamphlet "On the Necessity of Atheism."

This thesis, written in the form of a geometrical theorem with the traditional Q.E.D., was the outcome of the meditations of the two friends, and an abridgment of their analysis in common of Hume's "Essays." It was a categorical demonstration that the existence of God could not be proved by any of the stock arguments in its favour, whether drawn from the senses, from reason, or from evidence.

The didactic tone of the work leaves no room for doubt as to Shelley's serious purpose in writing it. Hogg speaks of it more lightly as "an innocent and insignificant thesis proposed for the delectation of lovers of logomachy." But for Shelley it was a heavy piece of ordnance intended to cause much noise and destruction. He had written it with intense conviction and fervour. "I will crush Intolerance," he wrote to Hogg. "I will at least attempt it. To fail even in so useful an attempt were glorious."

So soon as the work was in print* he hastened to send copies, under the name of Jeremiah Stukeley, to all those whom he wished to draw into correspondence on the subject, explaining that "he had met accidentally with this little tract, which appeared, unhappily, to be quite unanswerable."

"Unless the fish," writes Hogg, "was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant and break his bones. The strenuous attack sometimes provoked a rejoinder more carefully prepared, and an animated and protracted debate ensued."

* E. & W. Philipps, printers, Worthing, Sussex.

This did not last long, however. The pamphlet had been advertised in the *Oxford Herald* on February 9, 1811, and had caused consternation in the enemy's camp. Doctors of Divinity and Masters of Arts took counsel together to stop the infamous tract so soon as it should be on sale. Without Munday & Slatter's knowledge Shelley strewed their shop-windows and counter with copies of his pamphlet, telling their shopman to sell them as quickly as possible at sixpence apiece.* One of the Fellows of New College, the Rev. John Walker, was struck by the strange title. He entered the shop, looked into the pamphlet, and asked to see one of the principals. What was this poison they were vending? If they had any sense of propriety or any prudence, they would instantly destroy all the copies on which they could lay hands.

The booksellers, astonished and alarmed, hastened to follow this charitable advice, and at the blazing kitchen-fire, in presence of the Grand Inquisitor, John Walker, the *auto-da-fé* took place. At the same time they sent to Shelley, begging him to come and confer with them. Shelley arrived without delay, and an animated conversation ensued. On the one side, Mr. Munday, Mr. Slatter, and a certain lawyer named Clifford who happened to be present, representing to Shelley the error of his ways, pleading, imploring, threatening; on the other side the youthful author fearlessly defending his cause in a shrill and piercing voice, maintaining his right to free thought and free speech, and remaining to the last unconvinced and unpersuadable.

"He had done worse," he told them, "than spread his net in the sight of callow Oxford

* We borrow the above particulars from Mr. Dowden's 'Life of Shelley.'

birds—worse than shock the susceptibilities of a Fellow of New College; he had sent a copy of his pamphlet to every bishop on the bench, to the Vice-Chancellor, to each of the heads of houses, and with it a letter in his own handwriting.”

This open admission delivered him up to the enemy. It was an easy matter for the Oxford authorities to recognise Shelley's handwriting in that of Jeremiah Stukeley; the Dons consulted together, and resolved on his expulsion. On March 25th, a fine spring morning, Shelley was sent for to the Common Room, where he found the Master and some of the Fellows. Immediately on his entrance, a copy of the terrible syllabus was placed before him. A few minutes afterwards he rushed into his rooms, where Hogg was waiting for him, in extreme agitation: “I am expelled!” he exclaimed in a piercing voice, “I am expelled!” Then he gave the following account to Hogg:

“I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago. I went to our Common Room, where I found our Master and two or three of the Fellows. The Master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the Master loudly and angrily repeated: ‘Are you the author of this book?’ ‘If I can judge from your manner,’ I said, ‘you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country.’ ‘Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?’ the Master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice.” Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentleman like deportment, saying: “I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly but firmly that I was determined not to answer any ques-

tions respecting the publication. He immediately repeated his demand. I persisted in my refusal, and he said furiously: 'Then you are expelled, and I desire you will quit the College early to-morrow morning at the latest.' One of the Fellows took up two papers and handed one of them to me; here it is." He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the College.

Hogg instantly addressed a note, which Mr. Jeaffreson calls *impudent*, but which we should rather characterise as *courageous*, to the Master and Fellows, in which he begged them to reconsider their decision with regard to Shelley.

I wrote a short note to the Master and Fellows, in which I briefly expressed my sorrow at the treatment my friend had experienced, and my hope that they would reconsider their sentence. The note was despatched; the conclave was still sitting; and in an instant the porter came to summon me to attend, bearing in his countenance a promise of the reception which I was about to find.

Hogg followed Shelley's example; he refused to answer the questions of the Master, and instantly received a sentence of expulsion.

On the morning of March 26th, 1811, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Thomas Jefferson Hogg left Oxford for London.

It is in vain for Oxford to try and cleanse herself from the stain she incurred in expelling Shelley; vain are her present efforts to appeal from the verdict of public opinion, and Mr. Jeaffreson's dull pleadings serve only to deepen the stigma that rests upon the venerable University.

Mr. Rossetti is the mouthpiece of all that is intellectual and liberal in England when he writes:

In this case as in others, the honestest and boldest course is also the safest; and we shall do well to under-

stand once for all that Percy Shelley had as good a right to form and expound his opinions on theology, as the Archbishop of Canterbury had to his.

It is easy to perceive, as Mr. Jeaffreson says, that Mr. Rossetti is not an Oxford man !

CHAPTER VI.

SHELLEY IN LONDON, AT FIELD PLACE, AND AT
CWM ELAN—ELOPEMENT WITH HARRIET
WESTBROOK—1811.

THE two exiles reached London at dusk, and the next morning they settled in lodgings at No. 15, Poland Street. "The name attracted Shelley; it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom." The furnished lodging-house appears to him like an enchanted palace; he was "fascinated by a gaudy wall-paper of vine-trellises and grapes which adorned the parlour; and vowed he would stay there for ever." Every new impression was with him so vivid, that he imagined it must endure "for ever." Less than a month had elapsed, and Hogg having left him, the enchantment vanished, and he abode "alone in the vine-trellised chamber, where he was to remain a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes."

Mr. Shelley was horrified at his son's expulsion, and his first thought was to endeavour to separate him from his evil genius. To this end he had corresponded with Hogg's father, requesting him to come and lecture "his young man;" he had next written from an hotel to his son, stating as the conditions of forgiveness that Shelley must immediately return to Field Place,

must cease all intercourse with Mr. Hogg, and continue his studies privately under a master he would himself select. He reserved to himself the task of converting the young unbeliever by means of Paley's "Natural Theology." "I shall read it with him," he writes in melancholy mood to Hogg senior; "a father in such case will have more influence than a stranger." Meanwhile he invited the two rebels to dine with him at his hotel. On the 7th April, 1811, Hogg and Shelley, before presenting themselves at dinner in accordance with the invitation, took a long ramble together, during which Shelley read aloud some passages from a book criticising the Old Testament and ridiculing the Jews and their religion. Mr. Shelley received his guests with friendly courtesy; but presently began to bluster, not unkindly, and to grumble, swear, laugh, and cry all at once.

"What do you think of my father?" asked Shelley, aside, of his friend.

"That is not your father," replied Hogg; "he is the God of the Jews, the Jehovah you were reading about."

Shelley was so tickled by the reply that, bursting into irrepressible laughter, he slipped from his chair and lay stretched on the floor, to the entire stupefaction of his father, and of Graham, who was present. At this moment dinner was announced. Mr. Graham pulled Shelley to his feet, and they dined amicably. After dinner Shelley's father took Hogg aside and held a serious conversation with him, in the course of which Hogg advised him philosophically to get his son married as soon as possible. After tea, religion was introduced.

"There is certainly a God," said the Squire of Field Place; "there is no doubt as to the existence of the Deity." Then, as no one disputed

the proposition, the Squire, turning suddenly on Hogg, said: "Have you, sir, any doubt on the subject?"

"None."

"If you had, I could prove it to you in a minute."

"I have no doubt."

"But perhaps you would like to hear my argument?"

"Very much."

"I will read it to you, then," cried the Squire, drawing from his pocket a sheet of letter-paper whereon he had jotted down a few arguments taken from Paley's "Natural Theology."

"I have heard this argument before," said Shelley in a low voice to Hogg.

"They are Paley's arguments," said Hogg.

"Yes, you are right, sir," said the Squire, returning the paper to his pocket. "They are *Palley's* arguments, I copied them out of *Palley's* book this morning myself; but *Palley* had them originally from me; almost everything in *Palley's* book he had from me."

The prospect of studying Paley with the Squire as his *Egeria* was not calculated to fascinate Shelley. He replied to proposals from his father that he had resolved to remain in Poland Street, and that nothing in the world would induce him to give up Hogg. Thereupon the Squire drew his purse-strings tight and forbade him his house.

Amid all these conflicts and perplexities Shelley was not losing his time. While continuing his studies and discussions with Hogg, he was familiarising himself with the immense city, which his imagination represented to him in ages to come as a "habitation of bitterns, shapeless and nameless ruins."* In company

* Dedication of "Peter Bell the Third."

with Hogg, with his cousin Charles Grove, or with Medwin, he wandered through the streets and parks of London; through Kensington Gardens, the secluded parts of which—and especially one dark nook planted with old yew-trees—delighted him; through St. James's Park, where the sight of military evolutions elicited angry outbursts against standing armies and their danger to liberty; and by the green banks of the Serpentine, where he delighted in sailing flotillas of paper boats. On one occasion, about this time, he might have been found declaiming at the British Forum,* a Radical club; on another, after hearing the great preacher, Rowland Hill, at Surrey Chapel, and comparing his dramatic talent to that of Kean or Kemble, he addressed a letter to him proposing to occupy his pulpit and address his congregation. He also regularly attended, with his cousin, the great Abernethy's anatomical lectures at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

At this period he even thought of entering the medical profession. These various projects hardly accorded with the views of Mr. Shelley, and his patron the Duke of Norfolk, who wished him to enter Parliament. If he felt any enthusiasm for politics, it was quite in an opposite direction to the aristocratic Liberalism of moderate Whigs like his father. The miserable state of England at that time was not likely to reconcile him to Royalty, whose luxury and indifference, when contrasted with the severe sufferings of the people, presented a spectacle alike painful and grotesque. Shelley was moved by it to alternate tears and laughter. On June 19th, 1811,

* "He made so good a speech," says Grove, "that when he left the room, there was a rush to find out who he was, and to induce him to attend there again." Shelley evaded their enthusiasm by giving them a false name and address.

a grand ball was given at Carlton House by the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., in honour of the Bourbon *émigrés*. They were received by the Prince sitting under a crimson canopy of state, and passed from the Privy Council Chamber to the sky-blue satin room, decorated for the occasion with fleurs-de-lys. In the banqueting hall the great table extended to the length of two hundred feet, and through a groove in the table ran a stream of pure water flowing from a silver fountain, the banks of which were covered with green moss and aquatic flowers. Gold and silver fishes swam in mid-stream. At the end of the table, above the fountain, sat, on a throne of crimson velvet, the Prince Regent in a field-marshal's uniform, wearing a wig with a long queue, a large diamond ornament in his hat, a jewelled sword by his side. The grace and elegance of his manners were in perfect harmony with this theatrical costume. The sole question which occupied the minds of the company was whether the Countess of Clonmel or Mrs. Thomas Hope bore away the palm for splendour of attire.

We may imagine the exhilarating effect on Shelley when he read the account of such extravagant folly in the *Morning Herald*. He remembered it more than once afterwards when writing "Queen Mab," and "Swellfoot the Tyrant," describing the luxury and magnificence of the Royal table: "The price and pains which its ingredients cost might have maintained some dozen families a winter or two."*

His sense of humour was keenly touched by this Royal farce; and he purposed celebrating it in lyrical form. He wrote to his friend Graham, the musician, asking his co-operation:

"If, Graham, within that democratical bosom of thine yet lingers a spark of loyalty, if a true and firm King's man

* "Swellfoot the Tyrant," Scene 2.

ever found favour in thy sight, if thou art not totally hardened to streamlets whose mossy banks invite the repose of the wanderer—if, I repeat, yet thou lovest thy rulers, and kissest the honeyed rod—then, Graham, do I conjure thee by the great George, our King, by our noble Prince Regent, and our inimitable Commander-in-Chief—then do I conjure thee by Mr. Clarke, the Duke of Kent, and Lord Castlereagh, together with Lord Grenville, that thou wilt assist me (as heretofore thou didst promise) in my loyal endeavour to magnify, if magnification be possible, our noble Royal Family. . . . Thou hast a harp of fire, and I a pen of honey. Let then the song roll—well, let it roll! Take thou thy tuning-fork, for the ode is coming.”

The letter closes with a translation of the first verse of the “Marseillaise.”

The ode came, and was immediately printed. Only a few insignificant lines are now in existence. Shelley amused himself by flinging copies into the carriages of persons who called at Carlton House.

On April 18th, Hogg had regretfully left his friend, and started for York, where he was to study the legal profession. Shelley missed him sorely, and his first letters are full of grief and despair. Relations with his father were still much strained. When by chance Mr. Shelley happened to meet his son, he acknowledged his salutation by a look “dark as a thunder-cloud,” and a majestic “Your most humble servant.” “Father,” writes Shelley, on April 29th, “is as fierce as a lion again. . . . He wants me to go to Oxford to apologise to the Master, etc. No, of course. . . . I don’t know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist; it seems as if I had begun existence anew under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no, that is stupid.”

So long as his father did not relent towards him, Shelley subsisted in London by the help of money from Hogg, on the sums sent him in secret by his sisters (he had proudly refused all help from his mother), or on that given him

by his uncle, Captain Pilfold, a brave and jovial sailor, who considered it more creditable to be expelled from Oxford than to have gained the Newdigate. By way of return, Shelley "illuminated" him. The good uncle, with the help of the Duke of Norfolk, contrived to appease the wrath of the "lion" of Field Place; Mr. Shelley allowed himself at last to be persuaded, and agreed to receive his son at home once more. Next he made him an allowance of £200 a year, with permission to live where-soever he preferred, on condition, however, of keeping apart from Hogg.

Two hundred a year! It was more than Shelley hoped or wished for. "What is money to me?" he writes to Hogg. "What does it matter if I cannot even purchase sufficient *genteel clothes*? I still have a shabby great-coat, and those whose good opinion constitutes my happiness would not regard me the better or the worse for this or any other consequence of poverty. Fifty pounds per annum would be quite enough."

During the few weeks of his sojourn at Field Place in May and June, Shelley sorrowfully discovered a complete change of feeling in his sister Elizabeth. She had been serious, contemplative, affectionate, enthusiastic, despising the world, but she was now apathetic to everything except the trivial amusements and despicable intercourse of restrained conversation, "bowing before that hellish idol, the *world*; appealing to its unjust decisions in cases which demand a trial at the higher tribunal of conscience. Yet I do not despair; what she *once was* she has a power to be again, but will that power ever be exerted?" She looked upon her brother and his friend as mad. *Matrimony* had become "the subject of her constant and *pointed* pane-

gyric. It was monstrous!" Hogg felt incredulous; it seemed blasphemous to doubt Elizabeth's divine excellence. "Why, then," wrote Shelley, "not come and judge for yourself? Come *incognito*, my dear friend. I have two rooms in this house exclusively my own; you shall share them with me, you will be like a State prisoner. You must only walk with me at midnight for fear of discovery. My window commands a view of the lawn, where you will frequently see an object that will repay your journey—the object of my fond affections. I will meet you at midnight at the Horsham coach; and will return with you to York."

The project of a clandestine journey did not commend itself to Hogg, and Shelley found himself reduced to solitude. "I am a perfect hermit, not a being to speak with! I sometimes exchange a word with my mother on the subject of the weather, upon which she is irresistibly eloquent; otherwise all is deep silence!" The silent gloom of a home that in earlier days had echoed to the joyful games of his childhood filled Shelley with dark anticipations. "Why should we linger on the earth? My dearest hopes are fled. . . . She whom I had hoped to unite to Hogg is unworthy of him. . . . I have been thinking of Death and Heaven for four days. Where is the latter? Is there a future life? Whom should we injure by departing? Should we not benefit some? I was thinking last night, when from the summer-house I saw the moon just behind one of the chimneys, if she alone were to witness our departure?"

Elizabeth's desertion was one of the deep sorrows of Shelley's life, and at the same time increased his horror of bigotry and intolerance.

There could be but one consolation, another

female heart to take the place of the lost sister ; and this he found, while on a visit to his uncle Pilfold at Cuckfield, in the person of the poor schoolmistress of the neighbouring village of Hurstpierpoint. One of the Captain's daughters was among her pupils. Miss Elizabeth Hitchener thenceforth became Shelley's ideal of the valiant woman, the feminine apostle whom he afterwards celebrated as Cythna in the "Revolt of Islam."

At a somewhat later period, but while still in a state of enthusiastic admiration for his chance acquaintance, he writes : *

She is a woman with whom I have become intimate on account of her excellent qualities. Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted during youth a very deep and refined habit of thinking ; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice ; she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life. Under the patronage of a singularly liberal mind, this woman, when twenty years of age, became mistress of a school. She concealed not the uncommon modes of thinking which she had adopted, and publicly instructed youth as a Deist and a Republican. When I first knew her, she had not read "Political Justice," yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts. Such is the woman who will shortly become a member of our family.

From the first day of their acquaintance, in fact, Shelley had but one thought : to withdraw Miss Hitchener from her humble avocations, and attach her to himself as a soul necessary to his soul. Thenceforth he would confide all his thoughts to her keeping, and would disclose the inmost sanctuary of his being. On his departure from Cuckfield he left with his uncle various books for her use : a copy of Southey's "Curse of Kehama," Ensor's "National Education," and Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding." On his return to Field Place, he at once entered

* Letter to Godwin, July, 1812.

into a polemical correspondence with his newly-made friend, embracing all the great metaphysical, religious, and moral problems in which he was absorbed.*

Shelley also engaged in another correspondence while at Field Place with the two Miss Westbrooks, one of whom, the younger by fourteen years, was destined shortly afterwards to become his wife.

We must retrace our steps to make acquaintance with the Westbrooks. "Jew" Westbrook, as he was called, was a rich tavern-keeper in Mount Street, and besides selling food and drink at the bar, he lent money in his back-parlour to customers; and with the help of his wife, formerly a cook, he had made a large fortune by the two trades. So soon as his means permitted, he had removed his family to a private house in Chapel Street, and had provided his daughters with the education of young ladies. Thus the younger of the two was at Mrs. Fenning's school at Clapham at the same time as Mary and Helen Shelley. During the Oxford vacation Shelley's sisters had spoken with enthusiasm of their school-fellow, Harriet Westbrook; they admired her beauty and loved her for her gay and gentle disposition. She was in truth a charming child, whose faults of impatience or temper were forgotten in her bright smile. She was the favourite pupil, a capricious and lovely doll. Helen Shelley, who saw her for the last time in 1811, has traced her portrait in these words:

She was a very handsome girl, with a complexion quite unknown in these days—brilliant in pink and white—with hair quite like a poet's dream, and Bysshe's peculiar admira-

* About fifty of these letters are in existence. They are of the utmost importance to the history of Shelley's mind during 1811-1812.

tion. Mrs. Fenning and the under-mistresses used to remark upon her beauty, and often said she might enact Venus in a *fête champêtre*. Her eyes, like Shelley's, were blue and prominent, and her hair light brown.

She acquired a still deeper interest in Shelley's eyes from a hidden melancholy of temperament—often speaking of suicide, but so calmly that her hearers had ceased to be alarmed by her words. This depression of spirits, forming so strong a contrast to the bright and playful disposition of the fair Venus, was attributed to the sorrows caused by her father's tyranny. Trelawney relates that on one of Shelley's visits to Clapham, he found the young girls discussing Harriet's trials with her father, and that having himself suffered deeply from paternal tyranny, he conceived a generous passion for the interesting victim; and his sisters seeing no means of rescuing her, Shelley exclaimed on a sudden: "Well, then, I will marry her!" He considered his imprudent exclamation as binding, and kept his word.

Shelley's first acquaintance with Harriet dated from January, 1811. At the end of the Christmas holidays, his sister Mary had given him a letter of introduction to the Westbrooks, and a present for her friend, of which he was to be the bearer. In the course of the month, Shelley, on returning to Oxford, had forwarded to Harriet a copy of his novel of "St. Irvyne," by the perusal of which she could study at leisure the doctrines of Free Love, and imbibe the delicious poison of the poetic loves of Eloisa and Fitzeustace. It was probably in return for this attention, that she subscribed to a volume of poems by Miss Janetta Philipps,* a young writer warmly patronised by the poet.

* The book was brought out in 1811, under the title of "Poems by Janetta Philipps, Oxford," and was preceded by

A close correspondence between Harriet and Shelley ensued.

Miss Westbrook completed her conquest of the poet by confiding to him the unreasonable and tyrannical treatment she received from her parents, and her wretchedness in an atmosphere where there were none whom she could love; Shelley endeavoured to console her by raising her tone of mind, and uprooting all her superstitions. He soon conquered her first scruples. Harriet was fascinated, and easily forgot the repugnance she had at first felt for the atheist, whose fame as such had reached even the Clapham school. Shortly after her marriage (March, 1812), Harriet gives to a friend—Miss Hitchener—an account of this part of her life, whose tragic ending lends a touching interest to her letter.

Why does my dear friend continually mislead herself, and thus apply to my judgment, which is so inferior to her own? 'Tis true you have mixed more in the world than myself. My knowledge has been very confined on account of my youth, and the situation in which I was placed. My intercourse with mankind has, therefore, been much less than you may imagine. When I lived with my father I was not likely to gain much knowledge, as our circle of acquaintance was very limited, he not thinking it proper that we should mix much with society. In short, we very seldom visited those places of fashionable resort and amusement which, from our age, might have been expected. 'Twas but seldom I visited my home, school having witnessed the greater part of my life. But do not think from this that I was ignorant of what was passing in the great world: books and a newspaper were sufficient to inform me of these. Though then a silent spectator, yet did I know that all was not as it ought to be. I looked with a fearful eye upon the vices of the great, and thought to myself 'twas better even to be a beggar, or to be obliged to gain my bread with my needle, than to be the inhabitant of those great houses, when misery and famine howl around.

a list of subscribers, among whom the names of Shelley and Harriet Westbrook appear for the first time together.

I will tell you my faults, knowing what I have to expect from your friendship. Remember my youth, and if any excuse can be made, let that suffice. In London, you know, there are military, as well as everywhere else. When quite a child I admired these red-coats. This grew up with me, and I thought the military the best as well as most fascinating men in the world—though at the same time I used to declare never to marry one. This was not so much on account of their vices, as from the idea of their being killed. I thought, if I married any one, it should be a clergyman. Strange idea this, was it not? But being brought up in the Christian religion, 'twas this first gave rise to it. You may conceive with what horror I first heard that Percy was an atheist; at least, so it was given out at Clapham. At first I did not comprehend the meaning of the word; therefore when it was explained I was truly petrified. I wondered how he could live a moment professing such principles, and solemnly declared that he should never change mine. I little thought of the rectitude of these principles, and when I wrote to him I used to try to shake them—making sure he was in the wrong, and that myself was right. Yet I would listen to none of *his* arguments, so afraid I was that he should shake my belief. At the same time I believed in Eternal Punishment, and was dreadfully afraid of his supreme Majesty the Devil. I thought I should see him if I listened to *his* arguments. I often dreamed of him, and felt such terror when I heard his name mentioned. These were the effects of a bad education and living with Methodists. Now, however, this is entirely done away with, and my soul is no longer shackled with such idle fears.

After Shelley's expulsion from Oxford, one of his first visits in London had been to Mrs. Fenning's school, and Harriet took the opportunity of her own frequent visits to her parents at Chapel Street to convey to Bysshe the money sent him by his sisters. He improved his acquaintance with the Westbrooks, and particularly with Harriet's elder sister Eliza, who subsequently acted so odious a part in the poet's home. Her thoughts were now centred on becoming the sister-in-law of a future baronet, and Shelley suffered himself to be bewitched by this feminine fiend.

No sooner had Hogg left London than Shelley

received a visit from the two sisters at his lodgings. In his letters to Hogg he dwells complacently on the goodness and kindness of the elder Miss Westbrook, and on the progress of his anti-religious instructions to the two girls. "The fiend, the wretch shall fall!" he writes on the 28th of April. "Harriet will do for one of the crushers, and the eldest (Eliza) with some taming will do too."

He took frequent walks with them in the neighbourhood of the Clapham "prison-house" wherein poor Harriet was pining away. Eliza artfully contrived as many interviews as possible; on one occasion Shelley hastened to Chapel Street on her invitation, where he found the poor captive suffering from a severe headache. Eliza left him in her sister's sole company until a late hour of the night.

"My poor little friend has been ill," he writes to Hogg; "her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch, pale; her father is civil to me, very strangely; the sister is too civil by half. She began talking about *l'Amour*. I philosophised, and the youngest said she had such a headache that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below, he invited me; I refused. The two sisters are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better; to-day her father compelled her to return to Clapham, whither I have conducted her."

On their way thither, Harriet confided to Shelley the persecution she had to endure on his account, and the disdain with which she opposed her schoolfellows' cruelty. It is intelligible that such a confession must have alike inflamed Shelley's hatred of intolerance, and his love for the courageous girl.

Shelley's lessons were so fruitful, that the girl-freethinker soon became suspected on account of her advanced ideas, and was shunned by her

schoolfellows, who called her an "abandoned wretch." Helen Shelley alone stood by her, and such courageousness delighted her brother, who writes to Hogg: "She would be a divine little scion of infidelity if I could get hold of her." Helen was then thirteen, and Harriet sixteen. The little poems sent to Hogg at this period are expressive of Shelley's feelings at the time:

LOVE.

Why is it said thou canst not live
 In a youthful breast and fair,
 Since thou eternal life canst give—
 Canst bloom for ever there—
 Since withering pain no power possessed,
 Nor age to blanch thy vermeil hue,
 Nor Time's dread victor, Death, confessed,
 Though bathed with his poison-dew?
 Still thou retain'st unchanging bloom,
 Fixed, tranquil even in the tomb.
 And oh! when on the blessed, reviving,
 The day-star dawns of Love,
 Each energy of soul surviving
 More vivid soars above,
 Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
 Like June's warm breath athwart thee fly,
 O'er each idea then to steal,
 When other passions die?—
 Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
 When sitting by the lonely stream
 Where silence says "Mine is the dell,"
 And not a murmur from the plain,
 And not an echo from the fell,
 Disputes her silent reign.

(*April*, 1811.)

TO —

O thou
 Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path
 Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,
 But swiftly leading to those awful limits
 Which mark the bounds of time, and of the space
 When time shall be no more—wilt thou not turn
 Those spirit-beaming eyes, and look on me,
 Until I be assured that earth is heaven,
 And heaven is earth?

(1811.)

TO A STAR.

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene,
 Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance fliest !
 Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil,
 Which shrouds the daybeam from the waveless lake,
 Lighting the hour of sacred love, more sweet
 Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires !
 Sweet star ! when wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
 And all is hushed—all save the voice of love,
 Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast
 Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
 Sighs in the ear of Stillness—art thou aught but
 Lulling the slaves of interest to repose,
 With that mild pitying gaze?—Oh ! I would look
 In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
 Became enamoured !

(1811.)

In the middle of July, 1811, Shelley relinquished his previous intention of joining Hogg at York,* and went on a visit to his cousin Thomas Grove, at Cwm Elan in Radnorshire, in hopes of meeting the Westbrooks at Aberystwith, where they were about to spend part of the summer. But while looking forward to the happy moment which should reunite him to Harriet, he fell into one of those states of despondency which all his stoicism could not subdue, and in which even the charms of Nature failed to afford enjoyment.

"This is most divine scenery," he writes to Hogg, "but all very dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable ; indeed this place is a very great bore. I am now with people who, strange to say, never *think*. I am all solitude. . . . I must stay here, however, to recruit my finances, compelled now to acknowledge poverty an evil. . . . I do not see a soul ; all is gloomy and desolate. I amuse myself, however, with reading Darwin, climbing rocks, and exploring this scenery."

In his letters to Miss Hitchener he discussed politics and sociology. Equality—is it attainable?

* His father had written to him, "Go, if you please, to York, but not with my money."

If unattainable, yet is it not an ideal towards which society may perpetually advance? With a juster distribution of happiness and wealth, of toil and leisure, would not crime and the temptation to crime almost cease to exist? Would not the rich man himself be better off if free from the passions and evils to which his hereditary fortune predestines him? While replying to these questions with a conviction that such a paradise of equality need not be a visionary one, he could not refrain from casting a sorrowful and prophetic glance at the actual state of affairs, and the sanguinary conflicts that must needs arise sooner or later between the extremes of poverty and wealth, owing to the fatal effects of the present system.

He illustrated this to Miss Hitchener by a striking anecdote, which, when related by him, becomes symbolic of a high school of morality.

My window is over the kitchen. In the morning I threw it up, and had nearly finished dressing, when "For the love of charity" met my ear. These words were pronounced with such sweetness, that on turning round I was surprised to find them uttered by an old beggar, to whom in a moment the servant brought some meat. I ran down to give him something. He appeared extremely grateful. I tried to enter into conversation with him—in vain! I followed him a mile, asking a thousand questions. At length I quitted him, finding by this remarkable observation that perseverance was useless: "I see by your dress that you are a rich man. They have injured me and mine a million times. You appear to me well-intentioned, but I have no security of it while you live in such a house as that, or wear such clothes as those. It would be charitable in you to leave me."

Meanwhile Shelley waited in vain for the letter which was to summon him to Aberystwith.

Mr. Westbrook had brought his daughters so far as Condowell; but there he suddenly retraced his steps and returned to London, with the intention

of placing Harriet once more at the Clapham School. Harriet immediately acquainted Shelley with the plan, on which he endeavoured to befriend her by addressing an eloquent letter to her father; this failed, however, to soften the tyrant. Harriet then threw herself entirely on Shelley's protection, declaring she was ready to fly with him whithersoever he would. Shelley's scruples vanished before such devotion, and hearkening rather to the biddings of chivalrous sentiment than to those of love, or, as he himself described it after the event, "more" from "exerted action than inspired passion," he sacrificed himself, not without melancholy forebodings, and accepted enthusiastically a duty exacted from him by the sufferings and love of her who had placed herself in his hands.

In the first glow of feeling he writes to Hogg:

Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. Westbrook in vain! and in consequence of my advice *she* has thrown herself upon my protection. . . . Gratitude and admiration all demand that I should love her *for ever*. . . . We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short we must live, I suppose, upon love! . . . We shall see you at York.

Shelley hastened to London, where he found Harriet ill and undecided. Instigated doubtless by Eliza, she wished to make sure of her future position by a formal marriage. This was also the advice of Hogg, who was an ardent partisan of lawful matrimony. Shelley yielded to the opinion of his friend; he was perfectly indifferent on his own account to the views of the world, he only yielded to considerations of Harriet's interests and happiness. "A woman's happiness is fragile, all too easily shattered, and therefore to be guarded against shock or stroke." He knew

also "how useless" it was "to attempt by solitary and isolated examples to renovate the face of society, until reason shall have worked so radical a change that the experimenter may disregard vexations from the results, and place himself above the prejudice with which his opinion would be met by the immense majority."

On August 15, 1811, he writes to Hogg: "I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporising but from *your* arguments."* A promise of marriage was therefore given to both the sisters, and only money was wanting to carry out the elopement. Shelley borrowed twenty-five pounds from the father of his cousin Medwin. Finally, after several secret interviews between the lovers in the presence of Charles Grove, one fine morning in August (Saturday, the 24th, says Mr. Dowden) Harriet Westbrook stepped lightly and gaily into the hackney-coach waiting for her at a coffee-house door in Mount Street, the two cousins sprang in beside her, and the coach-wheels rattled towards the Bull and Mouth, where the trio waited all day for the departure of the Northern mail.

* "The *one* argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy, the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can make, this alone can justify me, were it a fault, for my hesitating submission to your superior intellect. . . . My father is here, much astonished probably to see me in London. He will soon be more so."

According to some letters to Miss Hitchener quoted by Mr. Dowden, Shelley spent a few days in August both at Field Place and at Cuckfield, where he again met his friend, and announced to her his intention of entering the "profession of physic." But he was soon recalled to London by a pressing letter from Harriet.

CHAPTER VII.

SHELLEY AT EDINBURGH, YORK, AND KESWICK
—MOMENTARY RUPTURE WITH HOGG—
SHELLEY AND SOUTHEY—1811-1812.

AT midnight the mail-coach stopped a few minutes at York, and Shelley wrote a hurried note to Hogg: "Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have seventy-five pounds on Sunday; until then, can you send ten pounds?" Hogg did better than send the loan, he started himself for Edinburgh.

During their journey Bysshe and Harriet had met with a young Scots advocate, who had explained to them the necessary steps for contracting marriage according to Scots law. Then on their arrival in Edinburgh they had found excellent rooms, and a good-humoured landlord who agreed to advance them money, on the one condition that Shelley should treat himself and his friends to a supper. The supper accordingly took place, but was nigh to ending with a tragedy. The landlord's roystering friends proposed to invade the rooms of the new-married pair at midnight; and Shelley, in extreme indignation, caught up his pistols and threatened to use them if they ventured on such a liberty. The marriage

was solemnised on August 28th, between "Percy Bysshe Shelley, *farmer*, Sussex, and Miss Harriet Westbrook, daughter of Mr. John Westbrook, London."

When Hogg arrived, the wedding was over. Mr. Timothy Shelley had soon been informed of the great event, and was highly indignant; he instantly cut off the supplies, and Shelley waited in vain for his quarterly allowance of £50, due in September. His uncle Pilfold enabled him to pay his debts, and to him it was due that he did not remain "chained to the mud and *commerce* of Edinburgh." Shelley's father next broke out into lamentations addressed to the elder Mr. Hogg, for it was presumed "that Bysshe having set off for Edinburgh with a young female, may stay at York on his way, and God only knows what may happen if your young man and my young man should meet!"

Hogg's arrival was the crowning joy of Shelley's happiness, and the five weeks spent by the trio in Edinburgh were weeks of Eden-like felicity. Hogg was dazzled with Harriet's beauty; he can scarcely paint her in sufficiently bright colours, or with sufficiently tender touches:

If it was agreeable to listen to her, it was not less agreeable to look at her; she was always pretty, always bright, always blooming. Without a spot, without a wrinkle, not a hair out of its place.

He frequently escorted her in her walks; together they visited Holyrood Palace and Arthur's Seat. He was shocked at the insensibility of the inhabitants of the northern metropolis to the charms of his youthful companion:

I went abroad with her there more frequently, but nobody ever noticed her; she was short, and slightly and delicately formed—not raw-boned enough for the Scottish market.

After breakfast, of which Shelley's share often consisted of bread and honey, the morning was passed in study: Shelley translating a treatise of Buffon (probably "*Les Époques de la Nature*"), while Harriet was at work in a similar way on a novel by Madame Cottin, "*Claire d'Albe*."* The afternoon was devoted to walks, and on their return from these, a little serving-maid, whose unmusical Northern accent was agonising to Shelley, would announce that tea was ready. Tea-time was spent in philosophical conversation; after which Harriet would begin to read aloud in her clear, sweet voice. "*Télémaque*" and "*Bélisaire*" were her favourite books.†

In spite of the charm lent to Fénélon and Marmontel by Harriet's clear voice, Shelley frequently yielded to "innocent slumbers" which gave serious offence to the fair reader. Before retiring to rest the three friends would stroll out to admire the stars, or perhaps the famous comet of 1811. On one Sunday Shelley was induced by Hogg to attend divine service in the kirk. "I never saw Bysshe so dejected," says Hogg; "... he looked the picture of perfect wretchedness; the poor fellow sighed piteously as if his heart would break." Yet he volunteered to be present at the evening Catechism. The extraordinary accent with which the catechist put his questions to his young neophytes: "Wha was Adam? ... Wha's the deil?" threw him into a fit of laughter that forced him to leave the church. On another

* The novels of Madame Cottin, which were so popular, especially with women, at the beginning of the century, were then in their first vogue. "Harriet," says Hogg, "rendered the two volumes exactly and correctly; and wrote the whole out fairly, without blot or blemish, upon the smoothest, whitest, finest paper, in a small, neat, flowing, and legible feminine hand."

† "She had the clearest pronunciation I ever heard."

occasion he incurred the severe reproof of a serious Scotchman, by his wild and noisy gaiety in the streets on the Sabbath day.

When their means began to be exhausted, the trio returned to York, travelling by post-chaise. The weather was rainy, and Harriet, to make the journey pleasanter, read aloud from one of Holcroft's novels,* which seemed anything but amusing to Shelley; he derived much more pleasure from the childlike speeches of his young bride, whose wonder was excited by every novelty on the journey, and who, as a "little Cockney," was so ignorant of the objects of country life that she had to learn from him the difference between a field of barley and a field of turnips. When the horses were changed, and Hogg busied himself about the luggage, Shelley would vanish. Once at Berwick, all was ready to start, but Bysshe was missing; Hogg went in pursuit, and found him "in a drizzling rain, gazing mournfully at the wild and dreary sea, with looks not less wild and dreary." The travellers reached York on a rainy evening in October. The young couple found lodgings, "and stayed for about ten days at the house of the Misses Dancer, Coney Street, the dingy dwelling of two dingy old milliners, fatal as the Valkyriæ, two of the Fatal Sisters not unworthy of a place in the Edda, who were manifestly designed to sew shrouds, hem winding-sheets, and make mouldering dresses for the dead."†

Shelley felt little of that interest in the ancient city of York, and its Christian antiquities, which would have been excited in a mind less full of abstract theories, and more mindful of the moral

* A popular novelist and comic author of the time.

† "York at that time," says Hogg, "was in many respects a poor city; rich only in ecclesiastical and civic pride—and it was not easy to find good lodgings."

and æsthetic teachings of history. The marvellous Minster appeared to him but a huge monument of the barbarism of the Middle Ages.

"When I contemplate these gigantic piles of superstition," he writes to Miss Hitchener (October, 1811), "when I consider, too, the leisure for the exercise of mind which the labour which erected them annihilated, I set them down as so many retardations of the period when Truth becomes omnipotent. All these useless ornaments are exertions of bodily labour which, though trivial separately considered, when united destroy a vast proportion of this invaluable leisure. How many things could we do without!"

Shelley was occupied with other cares, above all with anxiety about the means of living. Ten days had passed away at York, and his father made no sign of loosening his purse-strings, and Shelley resolved on seeking an interview with him in order to come to terms.

"I had thought," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "that this blind resentment had long been banished to the regions of dulness, comedies, and farces, or was used merely to augment the difficulties and consequently the attachment of the hero and heroine of a modern novel. I have written frequently to this thoughtless man [his father], and am now determined to visit him, in order to try the force of truth; though I must confess I consider it nearly as hyperbolical as 'music rending the knotted oak.'"

The journey to Sussex offered him, besides, some prospect of pleasure in a visit to Miss Hitchener, with whom his relations had become closer, more confidential, and more intimate since his marriage with Harriet. Miss Hitchener had received the news of his union with a woman so much his inferior with generous kindness, and had expressed the sincerest wishes for the happiness of both. Shelley's gratitude was boundless; he felt that he could now open his heart without reserve to his incomparable friend; he could tell her that he loved her with the love of a soul

for a soul—that love which is subject neither to time, nor change, nor death, and which is the clearest proof of our immortality. He felt it rather embarrassing to explain to so disinterested and superior a woman that money was the motive of his visit to Sussex. “But even the consideration of money may be ennobled by the thought that the true use of wealth is to procure freedom for those we love, and who will apply their freedom to high ends.” “Ought he not to share his fortune with *her* who is the sister of his soul, and with *him* [probably Hogg] who is its brother? Surely these have a right to it!”*

Full of these thoughts, Shelley announced to Hogg his intention of proceeding to Sussex in search of money, nor could he be dissuaded by his friend’s sensible advice from undertaking the journey. He departed, leaving his young wife to the guardianship of Hogg, and exposed to the suspicions which so delicate a position must inevitably arouse among her immediate neighbours.† During Shelley’s absence, Harriet spent long and lonely days in her own room at York. “Even when it was fair,” says Hogg, “she did not go out, having unfortunately transplanted her London notions of propriety to York; she considered it incorrect to walk in the streets of that quiet city by herself, where all eyes were attracted by her beauty.” Hogg came to see her of an evening, when they talked together of her husband or her family, or Harriet read

* Letters to Miss Hitchener, October, 1811. Miss Hitchener had the good feeling to refuse the offered share; all she asked was that Shelley would put aside a certain sum to provide for the old age of Miss Adams, her first instructress and “the mother of her soul.”

† Mr. Jeaffreson devotes a full page to detailing the hundred and one solutions by which the old milliners may have tried to account for Shelley’s sudden departure.

aloud from Holcroft or Robertson. Suddenly, four-and-twenty hours before the return of Shelley, Eliza Westbrook appeared upon the scene. The elder sister had only been waiting for an opportunity of taking the young couple under her guardianship, and she had now found it in Harriet's forsaken condition at York. Harriet had frequently spoken to Hogg of her sister's beauty; he was consequently surprised to find her face "seamed with the small-pox," her eyes dull and meaningless, her "beautiful hair" heavy and coarse, her features thin and unlovely. From the first moment of their meeting, Eliza and Hogg were enemies; they exchanged looks of aversion and dislike, and each set about endeavouring to oust the other. Hogg at once scented danger to the married pair in the presence of this shrew in their household; and, in fact, her arrival was followed by a sudden reversal of the habits of the little circle.

"The house lay, as it were, under an interdict," writes Hogg. "All our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious; to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave. Bysshe became nothing; I, of course, very much less than nothing. . . .

"Harriet still existed, it was true; but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision, to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's infinite perfections. Before the angelic vision, we had never heard of Harriet's nerves, we had never once suspected that such organs existed; now we heard of little else. 'Dearest Harriet, you must not do that; only consider the state of your nerves! Whatever will become of your poor nerves? What would Miss Warne say?'"

Shelley's journey into Sussex had brought him naught but disappointment. He had had, indeed, the happiness of meeting Miss Hitchener at the house of his uncle Pilfold; but his father had not yielded to the "force of truth," and,

worse still, refused to give any pecuniary help without promises of submission and amendment.

Hogg's first counsel to his friend was to send Eliza Westbrook back to London without delay. But Shelley was desirous of conciliating his father-in-law, the use of whose purse was needful at that time, and judged it inexpedient to make a declared enemy of Eliza. Hogg, however, continued to display his hostility to the unfortunate kill-joy, even in the presence of Harriet.

"Eliza," he tells us, "spent a great deal of her time in her bedroom. I asked Harriet what that dear Eliza did alone there? 'Does she read?' 'No.'—'Does she work?' 'Never.'—'Does she write?' 'No.'—'What does she do, then?' Harriet came quite close to me, and answered in a whisper, lest peradventure her sister should hear her, with the serious air of one who communicates some profound and weighty secret, 'She brushes her hair!' . . . One day, whilst the guardian angel kept on brushing, we brushed off, and wandered to the river. We stood on the high centre of the old Roman bridge; there was a mighty flood; father Ouse had overflowed his banks, carrying with him timber, and what not. 'Is it not an interesting, a surprising sight?'—'Yes, it is very wonderful. But, dear Harriet, how nicely that dearest Eliza would spin down the river! How sweetly she would turn round and round like that log of wood! And, gracious Heaven, what would Miss Warne say?' She turned her pretty face away and laughed—as a slave laughs who is beginning to grow weary of an intolerable yoke. . . . I had sometimes spoken of my intention of paying a visit to the English lakes, which visit had been exchanged for the matrimonial trip to Edinburgh. The image of lakes, mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and of the like picturesque and romantic objects which those districts present, at once took entire possession of light minds. The young couple became in an instant as to their whole souls, demoniacally possessed by the Genius of the Lakes, and it was impossible to exorcise them, to cast out the mischievous spirit, either by prayer, or fasting, or in any other manner—not even by bell, book, and candle; more especially since their Guardian Angel, smirking in silence, no doubt favoured the sudden fancy."

Hogg was invited, for manners' sake, to accompany the trio. He explained in his most

humorous language that his affairs required his presence at York; that November was not the right season for an excursion out of the way of everybody and everything; that Skiddaw, Helvellyn, Derwentwater, and Lodore would still be there next summer; Southey and Wordsworth as well . . . and even the asses they had so gloriously apostrophised and so sweetly sung. "We must go to Keswick, go thither at once and remain there *for ever!* Impossible to remain any longer in such an unpoetical, uninspiring hole as York; and you, Hogg, you yourself will soon rejoin your friends at Keswick and stay with them for ever!"

Great was Hogg's surprise when, on going to their lodgings one evening to dinner, he found the birds flown. An illegible pencilled note informed him that his friends had gone to Richmond, and invited him to join them there.

Were this part of Shelley's life only known to us through Hogg's narrative, we might justly accuse the former of strange inconstancy towards that "friend of his soul" from whom he had sworn nothing should separate him. Fortunately for us, and unfortunately for Hogg, there are other accounts, which, owing to the revelations of Mr. Dowden, throw complete light on this painful incident in Shelley's history. The following facts are derived from Shelley's hitherto unpublished letters to Miss Hitchener.

On Shelley's return to York he noticed that Harriet's attitude towards his friend was greatly changed, and that she regarded him with dislike. He inquired into her reasons, and discovered that his beloved friend had endeavoured to seduce his wife. The first advances had been made immediately after their removal to York, and he had renewed his hateful attempts during the absence of Shelley. Harriet had recalled him to reason

and to duty, on which Hogg, acknowledging his weakness and error, had offered, by way of expiation, to write to Shelley and confess all to him. Harriet had opposed this plan, fearing the effects of such a communication on the mind of the poet, and on the following day Shelley had returned.

What a blow for Shelley! What must be thought of the human race, if that superior being, "made," as he said, "to give laws to us poor creatures who crawl here below," could be capable of such a cowardly act? But it was impossible; it was a mistake; his friend was the victim of prejudice—he could not be wholly lost! Shelley determined to seek an explanation with Hogg.

"We walked to the fields beyond York," he writes to Miss Hitchener. "I desired to know fully the account of this affair. I heard it *from him*, and I believe he was sincere. All that I can recollect of that terrible day was that I pardoned him—fully, freely pardoned him; that I would still be a friend to him, and hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was; that his crime, not himself, was the object of my detestation; that I value a human being not for what it has been, but for what it is; that I hoped the time would come when he would regard this horrible error with as much disgust as I did. He said little; he was pale, terror-struck, remorseful. Oh, it is terrible! . . . This stroke has almost withered my being. Were it not for the dear friend whose happiness I so much prize, which at some future period I may perhaps constitute—did I not live for an end, an aim, sanctified, hallowed—I *might* have slept in peace. Yet no, not quite that; I might have been a colonist in Bedlam. Never shall that intercourse cease which has been the day-dawn of my existence, the sun which has shed warmth on the cold, drear length of the anticipated prospect of life! . . . I could have borne to die, to die eternally with my once-loved friend. I could coolly have listened to the conclusions of reason; I could have unhesitatingly submitted. Earth seemed to be enough for our intercourse; on earth its bounds appeared to be stated, as the event hath dreadfully proved. But with *you*, your friendship seems to have generated a passion to which fifty such fleeting, inade-

quate existences as these appear to be but the drop in the bucket, too trivial for account. With you, I cannot submit to perish like the flower of the field; I cannot consent that the same shroud which shall moulder around these perishing frames shall enwrap the vital spirit which hath produced, sanctified—may I say *eternised*?—a friendship such as ours."

Under such circumstances as these, it was needful for Harriet's sake to part from Hogg; Shelley did not hesitate, and they started for Keswick.

Whatever Hogg might say, he could have felt little surprise at the sudden departure of the Shelleys, and in place of humorous remarks on the Cumberland Lakes and the ass celebrated by Wordsworth, he had to face a situation in which he played Werther to the Albert and Charlotte of Shelley and Harriet.

He despatched one despairing letter after another to his friends, imploring Harriet's forgiveness, without which he says he will blow his brains out at her feet. He entreats to be once more admitted to their friendship; and hurt alike by his friend's generosity and by his refusal, he appeals to the conventional feeling of honour, and offers reparation by a duel. Shelley rejects the proposal with horror; "he has no right either to take the life of another, or to risk his own." Hogg thereupon takes up his own defence, alleging the violence of his passion and his high sense of honour. A correspondence lasting five or six weeks, to which Harriet herself contributed, ensued.*

A curious fragment has been preserved for us in Hogg's "Life of Shelley," under the title of "Fragment of a Novel," in which Shelley,

* It is unfortunate that we possess none of Harriet's letters on this subject. Hogg, who boasts of his correspondence with her, states that he has lost them, "although he vaguely remembers to have placed them aside," but has forgotten with what intention.

says his ingenious biographer, proposed to write a sequel to Goethe's "Werther," but wherein the reader easily discerns the situation, and recognises the true actors in the drama under their assumed names of Albert, Werther, and Charlotte.

There were three great attractions for Shelley in Cumberland, namely, the picturesque scenery of that English Switzerland, the society of the Duke of Norfolk, and that of the Lake poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, whose fame was increasing day by day.

Towards the end of November the trio reached Keswick, a town lying in the heart of the mountains, near the lakes of Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, both of which are visible from the garden of Chestnut Cottage, where our travellers installed themselves. The sublime calm of the magnificent scenery brought peace to Shelley's troubled soul.

"I have taken," he writes to Miss Hitchener on November 23rd, 1811, "a long *solitary* ramble to-day. These gigantic mountains piled on each other, these waterfalls, these million-shaped clouds tinted by the varying colours of innumerable rainbows hanging between yourself and a lake as smooth and dark as a plain of polished jet—oh, these are sights attunable to the contemplation! . . . I have been thinking of you and of human nature. Your letter has been the partner of my solitude—or rather I have not been alone, for you have been with me." And in a later letter: "These mountains are now capped with snow. The lake, as I see it hence, is glassy and calm. Snow-vapours, tinted by the loveliest colours of refraction, pass far below the summits of these giant rocks. The scene, even in a winter's sunset, is inexpressibly lovely. What will it be in summer? What when you are here?"

But the scenery was spoilt for Shelley by the inhabitants.

"Though the face of the country is lovely," he wrote to Miss Hitchener on January 7th, 1812, "the *people* are detestable. The manufacturers, with their contamination, have crept into the peaceful vale and deformed the loveliness

of nature with human taint. The debauched servants of the great families who resort contribute to the total extinction of morality. Keswick seems more like a suburb of London than a village of Cumberland. . . . Strange prejudices have these country people. I must relate one very singular one. The other night I was explaining to Harriet and Eliza the nature of the atmosphere, and to illustrate my theory I made some experiments on hydrogen gas, one of its constituent parts. This was in the garden, and the vivid flame was seen at some distance. A few days after Mr. Dare entered our cottage and said he had something to say to me. 'Why, sir,' said he, 'I am not satisfied with you. I wish you to leave my house.' 'Why, sir?' 'Because the country talks very strangely of your proceedings. Odd things have been seen at night near your dwelling. I am very dissatisfied with this. Sir, I don't like to talk of it. I wish you to provide yourself elsewhere.' I have with much difficulty quieted Mr. Dare's fears. He does not, however, much like us, and I am by no means certain that he will permit us to remain."

In the presence of the sublime lake-scenery Shelley's poetical nature awoke. The grand voice of the mountains, which he will afterwards hear still more resonant at the foot of Mont Blanc, that great voice "able to abrogate the vast codes of error and fraud," awoke favourite dreams, visions of another golden age, in the poet's heart. He contemplated a poem designed to set forth as in a picture "the manners, simplicity, and delights of a perfect state of society." "Will you assist me?" he wrote to Miss Hitchener. "I only thought of it last night. I design to accomplish it and publish it. Then I shall draw a picture of Heaven. I can do neither without some hints from you. . The latter I think you ought to *make*." From that night the idea of "Queen Mab" and "Prometheus" existed in germ in Shelley's imagination. Meanwhile he busied himself in collecting his shorter lyrics, the offspring of his early Muse, intending to publish them with the following epigraph:

I sing, and Liberty may love the song,

for the use of those philosophical and reflecting minds "who love to trace the early state of human feelings and opinions." But he chiefly interested himself while at Keswick in the composition of a novel, "Hubert Cauvin," in which he described "the state of morals and opinions in France during the latter years of the Monarchy," and exhibited the causes of the failure of the French Revolution.* His conception of a novel had entirely changed since he wrote "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne." He writes to Miss Hitchener on January 2nd, 1812: "I design to exclude the sexual passion; and I think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject. I have already done about 200 pages of this work and about 150 of the essays."†

But neither poetry nor the charms of Nature could enable Shelley to forget his straitened means. It became more than ever important for him to see the Duke of Norfolk, and induce him to exert his influence as mediator with the poet's father. The Duke, who at Shelley's request had just made one useless attempt to soften Mr. Timothy Shelley, no sooner heard of the Percy Shelleys' arrival at Keswick than he hastened to invite them to Greystoke.

This visit exhausted the poet's last resources, and on November 30th he wrote to his cousin's father, the elder Medwin:

We are now so poor as to be actually in danger of every day being deprived of the necessities of life. . . . I

* "You will see in my 'Hubert Cauvin,'" he writes in another letter, "that I have spoken of the policy of expediency, insincerity, mystery, as the immediate causes of violence and blood in the French Revolution."

† Probably essays on moral and political subjects. No trace of "Hubert Cauvin" can now be found in print or manuscript.

would thank you to remit me a small sum for immediate expenses. . . . Mr. Westbrook has sent me a small sum, with an intimation that we are to expect no more ; this suffices for the immediate discharge of a few debts ; and it is nearly with our very last guinea that we visit the Duke of Norfolk at Greystoke to-morrow. We return to Keswick on Wednesday. I have very few hopes from this visit. That reception into Abraham's bosom [*i.e.*, a possible reconciliation with his father] appeared to me to be the consequence of some infamous concessions which are, I suppose, synonymous with duty.

The Duke showed much courteous goodwill towards the poet, whom he wished to attract to political life. Bysshe, Harriet, and Eliza spent a few pleasant days at Greystoke, from December 4th to the 8th or 9th. "Jew" Westbrook's daughters bore themselves well in the high and brilliant company to which they were introduced. Shelley, although of polished manners and accustomed to society, felt ill at ease and out of his element at the miniature court.

"Fatigued with aristocratical insipidity," he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "left alone scarce one moment by those senseless monopolisers of time that form the court of a duke who would be very well as a man, how delightful to commune with the soul that is undisguised, whose importance no arts are necessary nor adequate to exalt !"

The visit to Greystoke produced an immediate and excellent effect on Shelley's father and grandfather. Shelley had not long returned to Keswick when he heard through his uncle Pilfold of the good disposition felt towards him at Field Place. Mr. Timothy Shelley was willing to allow his son an annual income of £2000, if the latter would consent to entail the estate on his eldest son, or, in default of issue, on his brother. On hearing of this proposal, Shelley's wrath and indignation were extreme.

"Silly dotards !" he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "do they think I can be thus bribed and ground into an act of such

contemptible injustice and inutility . . . that I will forswear my principles in consideration of £2,000 a year? . . . that I should entail £120 000 of command over labour, of power to remit this, to employ it for beneficent purposes on one whom I know not—who might, instead of being the benefactor of mankind, be its bane. . . . No ! this you will not suspect me of."

Among the guests at Greystoke, one, in particular, had attracted Shelley, and soon became his friend.

"He was an elderly man," wrote Shelley, "who seemed to know all my concerns, and the expression of his face, whenever I held the arguments which I do everywhere, was such as I shall not readily forget. . . . We have met him before in these mountains, and his particular look then struck Harriet."

This noticeable man was Mr. Calvert, a Liberal in politics, an interested amateur of scientific experiment, and a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth describes him in the "Castle of Indolence" as

A noticeable man, with large gray eyes.

It was at Mr. Calvert's house that Shelley first met Southey.

Shelley was even more attracted by men of letters and poets than by the Duke of Norfolk. But he was less successful in making their acquaintance on this occasion. The Lake poets, with the exception of Southey, eluded him. Wordsworth, who read none of the literature of the day, was unacquainted with him, and was destined to remain so for a considerable period. Coleridge* lamented subsequently that he had

* Hogg has transmitted to us the following interesting fragment of a letter from Coleridge on the subject of Shelley:

"I think as highly of Shelley's genius—yea, and of his heart—as you can do. Soon after he left Oxford he went to the Lakes, poor fellow ! and with some wish, I have understood, to see me ; but I was absent, and Southey received

missed the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the young philosopher, to whom he would have been of more use, he said, than was Southey. Another celebrated writer and critic (De Quincey, the opium-eater), was likewise destined to regret that, without the excuse of absence, he had failed to make the acquaintance of a brother-Oxonian and man of letters.

"Some neighbourly advantages I might certainly have placed at Shelley's disposal," he said many years afterwards in the curious article he wrote upon Shelley in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1846). "Grasmere, for instance, itself, which tempted at that time by a beauty which had not been sullied ; Wordsworth, who then lived at Grasmere ; Elleray

him instead. Now—the very reverse of what would have been the case in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred—I *might* have been of use to him, and Southey could not ; for I should have sympathised with his poetics, metaphysical reviews—and the very word metaphysics is an abomination to Southey ; and Shelley would have felt that I understood him. His discussions—tending towards Atheism of a certain sort—would not have scared *me* ; for *me* it would have been a semi-transparent larva, soon to be sloughed, and through which I should have seen the true *image*—the final metamorphosis.. Besides, I have ever thought that sort of Atheism the next best religion to Christianity ; nor does the better faith I have learnt from Paul and John interfere for the cordial reverence I feel for Benedict Spinoza. As far as Robert Southey was concerned with them, I am quite certain that his harshness arose entirely from the frightful reports that had been made to him respecting Shelley's moral character and conduct—reports essentially false—but, for a man of Southey's strict regularity and habitual self-government, rendered plausible by Shelley's own wild words and horror of hypocrisy."

When penning these words Coleridge had doubtless fresh in his memory the stanzas in which Shelley opens his heart to him, and traces for him the history of his thought, and the deceptions his soul suffered in his search for the ideal. (See "Lines to Coleridge," among the "Early Poems.") In connection with this subject, the portrait Shelley has drawn of the great Lake poet in "The Letter to Maria Gisborne" will be read with interest, as well as the lines referring to him in "Peter Bell the Third."

and Professor Wilson, nine miles further; finally, my own library, which, being rich in the wickedest of German speculations, would have been more to Shelley's taste than the Spanish library of Southey. But all these temptations were negatived for Shelley by his sudden departure. Apparently he had the instinct within him of his own Wandering Jew for restlessness."

Southey was more curious and more cautious; he invited Shelley to visit him; and the two poets were soon on a footing of mutual regard, if not of positive friendship. Southey admired the talent of the young thinker, and believed him to be good and generous of heart. He saw in him the Southey of 1794. The writings of the future Laureate, those of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the "Gebir" of Landor, were favourite subjects of study with Shelley. Southey was endeared to him as a poet who had been ardent in the cause of the French Revolution, and severely handled by Canning in the *Anti-Jacobin*. His "Wat Tyler" and his "Joan of Arc," in which he called kings the murderers of mankind, had placed him in the van of English Jacobinism. He had been a fervent admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft, and, together with Coleridge, one of the principal castigators of that republican propaganda which, having failed in England, was endeavouring to found a model Republic or Pantisocracy* in America.

On introducing himself to Southey, Shelley was mindful of the strong emotion he had experienced on reading the "Letters from Espriella," that pathetic picture of the sufferings of the poor, the misery of the working classes, and the barbarities of martial law.

But, however ready Shelley might be to admire, and Southey to be admired, friendship was difficult between two men whose genius and whose opinions

* See an allusion to this in his satire on literary apostates, "Peter Bell the Third."

differed so widely. Southey, at thirty-seven, was tinctured with the pride and arrogance of an aspirant to the laureateship. He was a pedagogue as well as a poet. Shelley found him narrow and limited, doling out his hospitality parsimoniously, listening to the younger man out of curiosity and by way of pastime, treating him as an inferior, almost as a child.

Southey possessed a fine library of rare books in every language, especially Spanish; his house was crowded with books even to the staircase. But they might not be touched without permission. Shelley saw little of them beyond their binding and titles. Occasionally Southey would take one down and read some passages to his guest, to whom they seemed mere puerilities. He was not partial to discussion, and stated his own opinion dogmatically. He resembled rather a living and speaking register of extracts than a man. He usually put an end to the controversy by a quotation which he regarded as decisive to a reasonable mind, and when Shelley gave vent to his ideas in enthusiastic and impetuous language, Southey would remark: "No doubt, no doubt; I thought and spoke just as you do when I was your age."

After some conversations of the kind, Shelley wrote to Godwin:

Southey the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says, "You will think as I do when you are as old." I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.'s proselyte.

In a letter to Miss Hitchener, December 26th, 1811, Shelley recounts his principal grievances against Southey:

I have also been much engaged in talking with Southey. You may conjecture that a man must possess high and esti-

mable qualities if, with the prejudices of such total differences from my sentiments, I can regard him great and worthy. In fact, Southey is an advocate of liberty and equality. He looks forward to a state when all shall be perfected, and matter become subjected to the omnipotence of mind. But he is now an advocate for existing establishments. . . . Southey hates the Irish ; he speaks against Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform. In all these things we differ, and our differences were the subject of a long conversation. Southey calls himself a Christian ; but he does not believe that the evangelists were inspired ; he rejects the Trinity, and thinks that Jesus Christ stood precisely in the same relation to God as himself. Yet he calls himself a Christian. Now, if ever there was a definition of a Deist, I think it could never be clearer than this confession of faith. But Southey, though far from being a man of great reasoning powers, is a great man. He has all that characterises the poet ; great eloquence, though obstinacy in opinion, which arguments are the last things that can shake. He is a man of virtue.

While retaining a high esteem for Southey's talent, Shelley left Keswick with a poor idea of his character, especially of the fixity of his opinions. As for Southey himself, he might not lay down his arms. The future author of "*Queen Mab*" and "*Laon and Cythna*" will be in his eyes a leader of what he will choose to call the "*Satanic School*," and, being no longer ignorant as he was when at Keswick, will be described as "*a perverse will and a corrupt heart.*"

Some years later, Southey gave full bent to these impressions in a letter to Shelley which cannot be too severely condemned. Shelley had written to him for an explanation of the attacks on Keats in the "*Quarterly*." Southey, instead of excusing the writer of the article, breaks out into violent recrimination against Shelley himself, making use even of certain confidential communications concerning his first marriage that Shelley had made to him when at Keswick. "*This letter,*" says Medwin, "*opened all the old wounds, and hurt Shelley cruelly for some*

time." And Byron, in his "Conversations," thus stigmatises Southey's conduct :

Shame on the man who could revive the memory of a misfortune of which Shelley was altogether innocent, and ground scandal upon falsehood ! What ! have the audacity to confess that he had for ten years treasured up some observations of Shelley's made at his own table !

Disappointed in his hero-worship of Southey, Shelley turned with delight to her who, at that period, symbolised all that was wanting in the human beings around him. His dream was to conquer liberty and happiness for the whole world.

If two hearts, panting for the happiness and liberty of mankind, were joined by union and proximity, as they are by friendship and sympathy, what might we not expect ? I anticipate the era of reform with the more eagerness, and picture to myself *you* the barrier between violence and renovation. I perceive in you the embryo of a mighty intellect which may one day enlighten thousands. Come, come ! and share with us the noblest success or the most glorious martyrdom.

The chivalrous campaign that was intended as a prelude to the conquest of the world, and was to be crowned by triumph or martyrdom, was the regeneration of Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHELLEY AND GODWIN—SHELLEY IN IRELAND— IRISH PAMPHLETS—1812.

DURING Shelley's sojourn in the Lake country, he had entered into correspondence with a man whose name had long been illustrious in the political and literary world of England. This was William Godwin, who has been surnamed the English Rousseau.

Godwin was born in 1756, and was in his fifty-sixth year when he received Shelley's first letter. Shelley was yet in the cradle when, in 1793, at the age of thirty-seven, Godwin had written the work that was destined to establish his fame as a philosopher and Republican. "Political Justice" is a work as cold and passionless as its author, and for that very reason is well adapted to attract serious and contemplative minds. Godwin describes in its pages a state of society from which, in opposition to actual social conditions, the oppression and injustice of the great, the foolishness and ignorance of the poor, would alike be banished "by means of a just and even distribution of the good things of life; a state of society in which every member would be independent, free from all convention-

alities, without exclusive rights or privileges, and amenable only to the pure dictates of reason and nature."*

This great work effected in England that which Rousseau's "Contrat Social" had effected for France. All the youth of the day turned towards the new apostle of modern political philosophy. Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge acknowledged Godwin for their master. Shelley is to inherit their enthusiasm, and one day to write that "he only really thought and felt from the day that he read 'Political Justice.'"

"Caleb Williams," a novel which appeared a year later, added to the fame and popularity of the young writer.

But the private life of Godwin, who was as timid and reserved in practice as he was bold in theory, offered a complete contrast to his doctrine.

As inimical to marriage as he was to every other social convention, and a celibate by nature, he yet was twice married. His first wife was the celebrated Mary Wollstonecraft, who became to Shelley the ideal of the woman-philosopher and woman-philanthropist for whom he sought among his female friends, and whom he afterwards portrayed in his poems. Between Mary and the author of "Laon and Cythna" there was more than one point of resemblance. For, like him, belonging to a wealthy family, she was deprived from early childhood, through the misconduct of her father, of the brilliant future that should have awaited her, and had learned in youth to bear her part in the hard struggles of life. She had early been made acquainted with the vices and follies of mankind, and she had ever received the

* No one in France has more truly appreciated "Political Justice" than Benjamin Constant in his "Mélanges de Littérature et de Politique."

homage due to her sex; she had worked for her bread with her needle; she had also been a school-teacher in a London suburb, where she wrote her first work, "Thoughts on the Education of Girls;"* she had afterwards been governess in Lady Kingsborough's family, where she found time for a thorough study of French, and for writing stories and tales; finally she found more lucrative and more independent work in placing her pen and her talents at the service of Johnson, the publisher. This clever man appreciated her genius, and invited her every Sunday to his table. His house was at that time the meeting-place of all the boldest and most original thinkers of the day, politicians, artists, and men of letters, and Mary had the opportunity of meeting Thomas Paine, William Blake, who illustrated some of her books for children in his own visionary way, the brilliant artist, Henry Fuseli, and William Godwin. The invectives of the latter against marriage made her an open partisan of the theory of Free Love—a theory which she subsequently put in practice. She expounded her own ideas in her celebrated book, "Thoughts on the Education of Girls," dedicated to Talleyrand-Périgord.† In that extraordinary work, full of sensible and practical ideas, and of delicate and profound observation, in which the women of the present day might find much to learn, a young girl for the first time laid down principles which have become the recognised basis of all the just claims of her sex.

* A book that has been unduly neglected. It is superior, in many respects, to the celebrated *Ign.* of Fénelon on the same subject.

† Mary had read, with passion the great, the Bishop of Autun's pamphlet on "L'Education Nationale" and believed in the writer's sincerity.

Many of her notions which then appeared premature and scandalous, have since been practically realised. She longed to obtain for women an equal degree of intellectual development with that of men, she claimed for them a similar education; that the same books should be placed in their hands, and that boys and girls should be brought up side by side in the same schools.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, having failed to win the platonic affections of the cold-hearted Fuseli, had sought consolation in a journey to France, there to study on the spot that marvellous revolution whose dawn had fired her enthusiastic spirit. Probably she did not play the part attributed by Shelley to her, under the name of Cythna in "*The Revolt of Islam*," for in her quality of foreigner, she would be an object of suspicion; but she did her utmost, and in company with Thomas Paine, she had her hour of triumph in Paris. The "*Rights of Women*" had been translated into French, and received with acclamation by the Press. The book was sold on the Boulevards together with the "*Droits de l'Homme*." In Paris she carried her theories on love and marriage into practice, and falling passionately in love with an American adventurer named Imlay, she bore him a daughter who finds a place in the life of Shelley under the name of Fanny Godwin. Mary received a terrible blow by the desertion of Imlay; she endeavoured to drown herself in the Thames, but was rescued by some boatmen. It was then (1797) that Godwin's philosophical affections were won by the courage and ill-fortune of this interesting being; he offered a shelter, to use his own words, "*to the wounded heart*," and friendship melted into love. Southey, who met her at this

period, and esteemed her highly, describes her in the following words:

Of all the lions or *literati* I have seen here, Mary Imlay's countenance is the best, infinitely the best. The only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display—an expression indicating superiority; not haughtiness nor sarcasm in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, *they* are the most meaning I ever saw.

Mary Godwin, the child of Mary Wollstonecraft and the author of "Political Justice," was born on August 30th, 1797. She was destined to become the wife of Shelley, and was herself a writer and poet, and a fit daughter of her whom she thus depicts:

Mary Wollstonecraft was one of those beings who appear but once, perhaps, in a generation, shedding a light on humanity which neither conflicting opinions nor fortuitous circumstances can obscure.

Godwin, being left alone with two children, endeavoured to find a second mother for them. He addressed himself unsuccessfully, to a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, the widow of a Mr. Reveley, whom we shall meet with again as Maria Gisborne, under which name she was lauded and sung by Shelley. In December, 1801, Godwin was married to Mary Jane Clairmont, a widow with two children, Jane, better known as Claire, Byron's mistress, then about four or five years old, and Charles, older by one year.

Godwin's second wife was intelligent and cultured,* but being free from the romantic and philosophic turn of his first wife, she somewhat effaced from his remembrance Mary Wollstonecraft's theories on the education of girls. But Mrs. Clairmont's practical and narrow views failed

* She translated several French story books for children.

to stifle in the youthful Mary those germs of free and independent thought which she had inherited from her mother.

The three little girls received the usual education from books published by their parents for the use of schools. In 1805, Godwin opened a Juvenile Library in Skinner Street. His star was beginning to pale; the needy bookseller of 1811 lived on a fame that might be called posthumous; before making his acquaintance, Shelley had supposed him to be dead.

It was from Southey that he learned the fact of Godwin's existence; and yet no long interval had elapsed since Wordsworth, writing to a student of law, had said: "Throw away your books of chemistry, and read Godwin on 'Necessity'; he alone is immortal." But the fate of Spenser's fairy Duessa, who in one and the same day finds herself a young girl and a decrepit old woman, had befallen Godwin. His unparalleled celebrity astounded the next generation, and in 1827 his admirers were placed in an embarrassing dilemma: "Either we must have been mad then, when we allowed the high morality of Mr. Godwin to seduce us, or we must now be miserable apostates, torn by personal interest, from the sacred cause of truth."*

At the time of Shelley's acquaintance with him (he was then nearly sixty), he was an old-looking man, short, massive, thick, with a fine clear complexion, a very broad bald head; simply dressed in an old-fashioned black suit, he looked like a dissenting minister!

In society he was usually reserved, shy, and silent; yet did he always inspire a certain interest. Whatever he said when he chose to be communicative, was listened to with

* See an article on Godwin in *The British Review* for June, 1827.

attention, and was always worth hearing. He appeared to myself and to others to be a perpetual contradiction. He was at once pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable; his conversation was yielded so sparingly that it could never offend by excess, or seem intrusive; his speech was abrupt and curt, but every remark had its value, and was peculiar and characteristic. . . . His articulation was indistinct; his utterance was not easy, but impeded by a sort of effort, or catch, sharp and dry.

The first occasion on which Shelley is mentioned in Godwin's Journal is under the date January 6th, 1812: "Wrote to Shelley." This was in reply to the letter of introduction of the young enthusiast:

KESWICK, *January 3rd*, 1812.

You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in any probability ever will, authorise that which common thinkers would call a liberty. It is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep "man at a distance from man," or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communications of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations. Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learnt your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind. I have but just entered on the scene of human operations, yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason, hence inferable, which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my

judgment. I am young. I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth. Do not suppose that this is vanity. I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me, I doubt not are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin? I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half-an-hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence. Certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment. I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship. At least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu. I shall earnestly await your answer.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Godwin's reply to this letter has been lost. But a continuous correspondence was begun between himself and Shelley, in the course of which the elderly philosopher, who, like others, had outlived his youthful enthusiasm, applied himself to moderate the impetuosity and impatience of his young disciple, and to restrain his irrepressible longing to reform mankind. Shelley submitted with docility to the wisdom of the author of "Political Justice;" he promises to try to acquire that soberness of spirit, that calmness of thought which, he says, "is the characteristic of true heroism." He quotes—

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air—

and hopes he will not outstep the boundaries of the "modesty of nature." "He will not again crudely obtrude the question of Atheism on the world," yet he is desirous not to sacrifice all things

to the feigned humility that has paralysed so much of the power of mankind ; he cannot resign himself to quit the arena he entered so boldly, to renounce the apostolate of the true and good :

But could I not at the same time improve my own powers and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many, with equally confined talents to my own, are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their principles?

The trial of strength upon which he is eager to enter, and of which he speaks with extreme reserve to Godwin, fearing he may be stopped by objections from the philosopher, is the same on which he dilates with great openness in his letters to Miss Hitchener : the emancipation of Ireland.

Shelley seems to have felt at an early period, a chivalrous love for that unhappy country. In his novel of "St. Irvyne" he personified his moral ideal in an Irish gentleman, who, to charm his mistress, sings to her the patriotic songs of his native land. And in 1811 he wrote a poem* in aid of Peter Finnerty, a brave Irish patriot, who was then enduring an imprisonment of eighteen months for

* "A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things. By a Gentleman of the University of Oxford." The epigraph was borrowed from Shelley's favourite poem, "The Curse of Kehama," by Southey :

"And Famine at her bidding wasted wide
The wretched land, till, in the public way,
Promiscuous where the dead and dying lay,
Dogs fed on human bones in the open light of day."

Strange to say, this poem, which was formally announced in the London and Oxford newspapers, and which brought, it is said, £100 to poor Finnerty, is not to be found. Mr. Dowden ingeniously conjectures that the lost poem may probably be discovered in substance in those portions of "Queen Mab" which eloquently depict the disorders and miseries of Shelley's time.

having written an article in the *Morning Chronicle* on the cruelties practised in Ireland under the Government of Lord Castlereagh.

His conversations with Southey on Irish questions had still further inflamed his desire to devote himself to the cause of Ireland's emancipation, and the last days of his stay at Keswick were spent in preparation for the accomplishment of his design.

Before leaving Cumberland he wrote to Godwin, January 28th, 1812 :

I have been preparing an Address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil impressions from Catholicism, may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm ; it cannot excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth. It cannot "widen the breach between the kingdoms," as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy ; and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony ; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland, regarding, as I do, the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed.

The Address was to be printed in Dublin with his poems, and was to be affixed to the walls of the city.

When on the point of embarking at Whitehaven prior to commencing the crusade, and all aglow with enthusiastic hope, he writes to Miss Hitchener :

We are now at Whitehaven—a miserable, manufacturing sea-port town. I write to you a short letter to inform

you of our safety, and that the wind which will fill the sails of our packet to-night is favourable and fresh. Certainly it is laden with some of your benedictions, as with the breath of the disembodied virtues who smile upon our attempt. We set off to-night at twelve o'clock, and arrive at the Isle of Man, whence you will hear from us to-morrow; then we proceed, when the wind serves, to Dublin. We may be detained some days in the island; if the weather is fine we shall not regret it; at all events we shall escape this filthy town and horrible inn. . . . We felt regret at leaving Keswick. I passed Southey's house without *one* sting. He is a man who *may* be amiable in his private character, stained and false as is his public one. He may be amiable, but if he is, my feelings are liars, and I have been so long accustomed to trust to them in these cases, that the opinion of the world is not the likeliest corrector to impeach their credibility. But we left the Calverts with regret. I hope some day to show you *Mrs.* Calvert; I shall not forget her, but will preserve her memory as another flower to compose a garland which I intend to present to *you*.

Shelley, accompanied by Harriet and Eliza, sailed from Whitehaven on February 3rd, remained for a few days in the Isle of Man, and after twenty-eight hours of rough sea, reached Dublin in the night of February 12th, 1812.

Immediately on landing he wrote to Miss Hitchener :

. . . . At length, however, you are free from anxiety for our safety, as *here* we have nothing to apprehend but Government, which will not, assure yourself, *dare* to be so barefacedly oppressive as to attack my *Address*; it will breathe the spirit of peace, toleration, and patience; . . . as my name, which will be prefixed to the *Address*, will show that my deeds are not deeds of darkness, nor my counsels things of mystery and fear. . . . Dread nothing for me; the course of my conduct in Ireland (as shall the entire course of my life) shall be marked by openness and sincerity. . . . The ocean rolls between us. O thou ocean whose multitudinous billows ever wash Erin's green isle, on whose shores this venturous arm would plant the flag of liberty, roll on!

TO IRELAND.

Bear witness, Erin! when thine injured isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures smile,
Its cornfields waving in the winds that sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling deep.
Thou tree whose shadow o'er the Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth, and beauty, to its friendly wave,
. . . . its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast its shade ;
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty fruit,
Whose chillness struck a canker to its root.

On arriving in Dublin, one of Shelley's first steps was to call at Curran's house in order to present to the great lawyer and patriot a letter of introduction given him by Godwin. Shelley had been deeply interested by his speeches even before he purposed to visit Ireland; he knew Curran to have been bravely devoted to the cause of the victims of the Rebellion. Curran, however, was not very eager to make his acquaintance. Shelley called twice at his house without finding him. His political pamphlets were not of a nature to impress Curran favourably. The former friend of Robert Emmet, the eloquent advocate of Rowan and Wolfe Tone, the author of the celebrated speech on the state of Ireland, delivered in the Dublin House of Parliament in 1794, had become more moderate in his views since he had accepted the office of Master of the Rolls, which enforced a certain reserve and a prudent circumspection with regard to revolutionary agitators.

Shelley was eager to begin the campaign, and lost no time in putting his "Address to the Irish People" in the hands of the printers.*

* Hogg, who never forgets to mention his enemy Eliza, tells us that while the Address was in the press, the Guardian Angel did her best for the regeneration of Ireland by collecting "useful passages" for publication from the works of

Twelve days after his arrival, the "Address to the Irish People, by P. B. Shelley, price 5*d.*," was published in an edition of fifteen hundred copies.

It had been rapidly written in a popular style, and was somewhat immature, but it contained passages sparkling with enthusiasm and patriotism, and breathed throughout such sincere and warm feelings of humanity and fraternity, as could not fail to reach the heart of the people. While putting forward the claims on which all the Revolutionary Committees were agreed, viz., Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union, Shelley went far beyond these.

He pleaded the cause of all the great thoughts that had hitherto found a home in his soul, and which now rushed burning from his pen in words that were clear, simple, spirited, and highly coloured, but that were always noble, and frequently poetical. It was difficult to remain unmoved by the earnestness and sincerity with which the young enthusiast preached liberty of conscience, political tolerance, religious equality in the eyes of the law, horror of persecution and of fanaticism, and universal love and charity, "that great principle of the gospel of Christ." Wheresoever human nature was allowed its natural sway, those human accents of Shelley must have found an echo.

The more thought there is in the world, the more happiness and liberty will there be. . . . Oh, Irishmen!

Tom Paine. As for Harriet, she was a warm convert to the cause of Ireland. "I am Irish," she had written to Miss Hitchener when about to quit Keswick, ". . . I have done with the English. I have witnessed too much of John Bull, and I am ashamed of him. . . . I will claim kindred with those brave sons of the ocean, and when I am deceived in them it will be enough."

I am interested in your cause ; and it is not because you are Irishmen or Roman Catholics that I feel with you and feel for you, but because you are men and sufferers. Were Ireland at this time peopled with Brahmins, this very same Address would have been suggested by the same state of mind.

It must be admitted, however, that to the Catholics of Ireland this was precisely the weak point in his reasoning. Freedom of thought, in which he believed all strength consisted, was just what told against his philanthropic crusade. The history of the ancient Catholic religion as traced by him after the manner of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, could scarcely be to the taste of Irish Catholics ; they could hardly respond with enthusiasm to the invitation of the young tribune to be on their guard against falling under the yoke of the priests, "those mild-faced and beardless impostors," who speak of liberty, and only wish for slaves. He little understood Catholics, who tried to convert them to a worship "without priests, altars, confessionals, processions, or miracles," to that interior worship taught by Socrates, "the only worship that should be dear to a good man, the worship of pure heart-felt affection, the piety that is displayed by good actions." Yet every Irishman must have felt proud, and at the same time enthusiastically hopeful, when Shelley poured forth these pathetic words :

'Oh ! Ireland, thou emerald of the ocean, whose sons are generous and brave, whose daughters are honourable, and frank, and fair ; thou art the isle on whose green shores I have desired to see the standard of liberty erected, a flag of fire, a beacon at which the world shall light the torch of Freedom ! . . . Adieu, my friends ! May every sun that shines on your green island see the annihilation of an abuse, and the birth of an embryo of melioration ! Your own hearts—may they become the shrines of purity and freedom, and never may smoke to the Mammon of unrighteousness ascend from the unpolluted altar of their devotion !

As for the means of attaining Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union, Shelley was the declared enemy of violent or cowardly measures. He quoted as an example the French Revolution, which had been a terrible failure for the people, because it had made use of violence and falsehood.

"My warm-hearted friends," he exclaims with blunt freedom, "who meet together to talk of the distresses of your countrymen, until social chat induces you to drink rather freely ; as ye have felt passionately, so reason coolly. Nothing hasty can be lasting ; lay up the money with which you usually purchase drunkenness and ill-health, to relieve the pains of your fellow-sufferers. Let your children lisp of Freedom in the cradle—let your death-bed be the school for fresh exertions—let every street of the city, and field of the country, be connected with thoughts which liberty has made holy. Be warm in your cause, yet rational, and charitable, and tolerant—never let the oppressor grind you into justifying his conduct by imitating his meanness.

He would fain inspire the Irish with his own hopefulness, based on the friendly dispositions of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. :

That great and good man, Charles Fox, who was your friend, and the friend of Freedom, was the friend of the Prince of Wales. The Prince was the better for his instructive conversation. He saw the truth, and he believed it. But will he redress your wrongs ?

Shelley can feel no certainty of this, and his prophetic soul casts a glance on the future of that weak and unworthy Prince :

I know not what to say ; his staff is gone and he leans upon a broken reed ; his present advisers are not like Charles Fox, they do not plan for liberty and safety, not for the happiness, but for the glory of their country ; and what, Irishmen, is the glory of a country divided from their happiness ? It is a false light hung out by the enemies of Freedom to lure the unthinking into their net. Men like these surround the Prince, and whether or no he has really

promised to emancipate you, whether or no he will consider the promise of a Prince of Wales binding to a King of England, is yet a matter of doubt. We cannot at least be quite certain of it; on this you cannot certainly rely. . . . Mildness, sobriety, and reason are the effectual methods of forwarding the ends of liberty and happiness. . . . O Irishmen, REFORM YOURSELVES! Your reform must begin at your own firesides.

The reform of Ireland was in Shelley's eyes but the first step towards the thorough emancipation of the human race, and the realisation of the Millennium of "Political Justice"—that universal reign of reason and love. We now, for the first time, find the poet's favourite theme of a social Palingenesis by the final triumph of virtue developed at some length; he was soon to give it poetical form in "Queen Mab," and at last to invest it with supreme beauty in "Prometheus Unbound."

The Address concluded with these words of Lafayette, whose name is "endeared, by its peerless bearer, to every lover of the human race":

For a nation to love liberty it is sufficient that she knows it, to be free it is sufficient that she wills it.

Shelley forwarded copies of his pamphlet to all his friends, including the great William Godwin, and he was anxious to justify himself in the eyes of his austere and timorous Mentor for the youthful eagerness with which he had published his thoughts. He writes to him under the date of February 24th:

I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. . . . I therefore write and I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society and my hopes

of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment; and my publications will present to the moralist and the metaphysician a picture of a mind, however juvenile and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn; and to leave out the early lineaments of its appearance would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality.

In order to gain some idea of Shelley's activity during his demagogic and humanitarian fever, it is necessary to read his letters to Miss Hitchener. In these there is none of the sobriety with which he addresses Godwin; he allows full play to the illusions of his revolutionary zeal:

Lower Sackville Street, February 27th, 1812.

I have already sent four hundred of my little pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder in Dublin; eleven hundred yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to sixty public houses. No prosecution is yet attempted; I do not see how it can be. Congratulate me, my friend, for everything proceeds well. I could not expect more rapid success. The persons with whom I have got acquainted approve of my principles. . . . I do not doubt your ardent desire to "share with me the high delight of awaking a noble nation from the lethargy of its bondage." . . .

Expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions how and where to give them. . . . I stand at the balcony of our window and watch till I see a man *who looks likely*; I throw a book to him. On Monday my next book makes its appearance. This is addressed to a different class, recommending and proposing associations. I have in my mind a plan for proselytising the young men at Dublin College. Those who are not entirely given up to the grossness of dissipation are perhaps reclaimable. . . . Whilst you are with us in Wales, I shall attempt to organise [a philanthropic association] there which will co-operate with the Dublin one. Might I not extend them all over England, and *quietly* revolutionise the country? . . .

My youth is much against me here. Strange that

truth should not be judged by its inherent excellence, independent of any reference to the utterer. . . . I have not yet seen Curran. . . . I do not like him for accepting the office of "Master" [of the Rolls]. O'Connor, brother to the rebel Arthur, is here. [I have] written to him. . . . I am resolved. Good principles are scarce here. The public papers are either Oppositionists or Ministerial. One is as contemptible and narrow as the other. I wish I could change this. I am of course hated by both of those parties. The remnant of united Irishmen whose wrongs make them hate England, I have more hope of. I have met with no determined Republicans, but have found some who are *democratifiable*.

Shelley had forwarded a copy of his pamphlet to Godwin, and great must have been the shock to his ardent proselytising zeal when he received the philosopher's reply. Never did a more glacial stream fall on more burning, fevered pulses. We can picture to ourselves the disappointment of the fervent apostle who believed himself about to revolutionise England, on reading the following lines, full as they are of common sense and prudent reserve:

March 4th, 1812.

In your last letter you say: "I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue; and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good."

Oh, my friend, how short-sighted are the views which dictated this sentence! Every man in every deliberate action of his life imagines he sees a preponderance of good likely to result. This is the law of our nature from which none of us can escape. You do not on this point generically differ from the human beings about you. Mr. Burke and Tom Paine, when they wrote on the French Revolution, perhaps equally believed that the sentiments they supported were essentially conducive to the welfare of man. . . .

In the pamphlet you have just sent me, your views and mine, as to the improvement of mankind, are decisively at issue. You profess the immediate object of your efforts to be "the organisation of a society, whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members." If I may be allowed to understand my book on "Political Justice," its pervading

principle is, that association is a most ill-chosen and ill-qualified mode of endeavouring to promote the political happiness of mankind. And I think of your pamphlet, however commendable and lovely are many of the sentiments it contains, that it will be either ineffective to its immediate object, or that it has no very remote tendency to light again the flames of rebellion and war. . . .

Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind; but associations, organised societies, I firmly condemn.

You may as well tell the adder not to sting;
You may as well use question with the wolf;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of Heaven,

as tell organised societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression, prompted by a deep aversion to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes, and the evils of war, to be innocent, to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth. I never was at a public political dinner, a scene that I have not now witnessed for many years, that I did not see how the enthusiasm was lighted up, how the flame caught from man to man, how fast the dictates of sober reason were obliterated by the gusts of passion, and how near the assembly was, like Alexander's compotators at Persepolis, to go forth and fire the city; or like the auditors of Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, to apply a flaming brand to the mansion of each several conspirator. . . .

One principle that I believe is wanting in you, and all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought that almost every institution or form of society is good in its place, and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour! To them we owe almost all our logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view, nothing can perhaps be more worthy of our applause than the English Constitution.

The last remark must have been peculiarly distasteful to Shelley, who in his second pamphlet, "Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists,"

had expounded somewhat crudely his theories on politics, and launched into violent abuse of the English Constitution. Starting from the principle that there can be no lawful Constitution except that made by the people for their own benefit, he proceeded to show that neither the Great Charter nor the Bill of Rights, the origin of which is held up to us as equally sacred, mysterious, and awful as the law of nature, had any right to the title of Constitution.

The speeches of kings . . . the writings of courtiers, and the journals of Parliament, which teem with its glory, are full of political cant, exhibit the skeleton of national freedom, and are fruitless attempts to hide evils in whose favour they cannot prove an alibi. . . . The songs of "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King" are but abstracts of the caterpillar creed of courtiers, cut down to the taste and comprehension of a mob; the one to disguise to an alehouse politician the evils of that devilish practice of war, and the other to inspire among clubs of all descriptions a certain feeling which some call loyalty and others servility.

The morning of Friday, February 28th, 1812, was a morning of excitement for the Sackville Street trio. On that day a meeting of the friends of Catholic Emancipation, under the presidency of Lord Fingall, was held in Fishamble Street Theatre, and Shelley was to make a speech. Women were present at such meetings; indeed, they formed a chief attraction. The English police had sent over detective officers to report the proceedings.* We do not possess the exact words of Shelley's speech, which unluckily was immediately preceded by a masterly discourse from O'Connell, but he tells us that he spoke for more than an hour,† and we can form a good

* Of the two reports in existence, one does not mention Shelley, the other, giving a list of the speakers, names a certain Shelley, "who gives himself out as a born Englishman."

† Mr. Jeaffreson considers that Shelley's speech lasted

idea of it from extracts given by the Dublin newspapers, and in particular by the account in the *Evening Post* of February 29th :

Mr. Shelley asked for a hearing. He was an Englishman, and when he reflected on the crimes committed by his nation on Ireland he could not but blush for his countrymen, did he not know that arbitrary power never failed to corrupt the heart of man. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) He had come to Ireland for the sole purpose of interesting himself in the fortunes of the country, and impressed with a full conviction of the necessity of Catholic Emancipation, and of the baneful effects which the union with Great Britain had entailed upon Ireland. He had walked through the fields of the country and the streets of the city . . . and had seen that edifice which ought to have been the fane of their liberties converted into a temple of Mammon.* (Thunders of applause.) He beheld beggary and famine in the country, and he could lay his hand on his heart and say that the cause of such sights was the union with Great Britain. (Hear, hear !) He was resolved to do his utmost to promote a repeal of the Union. Catholic Emancipation would do a great deal towards the amelioration of the condition of the people, but he was convinced that the repeal of the Union was of more importance. He considered that the victims whose members were vibrating on gibbets were driven to the commission of the crimes which they expiated by their lives, by the effects of the Union. . . .

He could not imagine that the religious opinions of a man should exclude him from the rights of society. The original founder of their religion taught no such doctrine. Equality in this respect was general in the American States, and why not here ? Did a change of place change the nature of man ? He would beg those in power to recollect the French Revolution ; the suddenness, the violence with which it burst forth, and the causes which gave rise to it. He ended by expressing a hope that many years would not pass over his head before he had made himself conspicuous at least by his zeal on behalf of Emancipation and Repeal.

We learn from Shelley himself, that when he spoke of his doctrine of religious free-thought,

not longer than ten minutes. What an admirable judge of time is Mr. Jeaffreson !

* The Houses of Parliament converted into the Bank of Ireland.

his words were received with disapprobation and hisses. He must have been very ignorant of Irish politics, or very anxious to expound his dearest principles, to venture on asking a meeting of Irishmen for equal rights for the Protestant minority and the Catholic majority. He would not have committed such an error a few years later. He had learned from reflection, that the art of persuasion is not the same as the art of reasoning, and that concessions must be made, artifice used, and even a certain amount of legitimate cunning employed when we would rule by eloquence. He appeals to the conduct of Christ himself, who, when preaching the abrogation of the Old Law, said to the Jews: "Think not I am come to destroy the Law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

Shelley's discourse, however, must have made a powerful impression on his audience, coming as it did from the lips of a youth (who at that time looked about fifteen), and uttered with the same warmth and conviction that inspire the Irish pamphlets of which the speech was only an abridgment. In the *Weekly Messenger* of March 7th, there appeared a long article in honour of the youthful tribune, of "the bold and fearless advocate of good-will, the missionary of truth," who had courageously put his finger on the political wounds of Ireland, and had proclaimed the true principles of Christianity.

The writer of the article was Mr. Lawless, an ardent partisan of Emancipation, known in Dublin as "honest Jack Lawless," and at that time engaged on a history of Ireland. His

* There is a remarkable passage in the Essay on Christianity, wherein Shelley criticises admirably his own juvenile rhetoric when he spoke in Dublin. More than one point of likeness may be found in Shelley's "Essay," and the "Vie de Jésus" by M. Renan.

character, his Republican proclivities, his project of a history, made him interesting to Shelley, who, believing that such a work would be an efficacious means of instructing the Irish public on the righteousness of their claims, determined to contribute to that end with his purse, if not his pen, and asked Mr. Medwin to raise two hundred and fifty pounds for the purpose of furthering the undertaking.*

Shelley soon discovered that in order to please Irish Catholics, it was necessary to share their prejudices, their dislikes, and their intolerance; that his great philosophical principles were mistrusted by the leaders, and that the Irish people were in no mood to undertake a chivalrous crusade for the benefit of humanity in general.†

Yet although the Irish people, as he began to know them better, appeared to him more distressed and less deserving of pity, his heart bled at the idea of deserting them in their misery and of renouncing all efforts to better their condition.

"Can they be in a worse state than at present?" he wrote to Godwin, endeavouring to refute the arguments of the latter against association. "Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides, appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being. Is it impossible to awaken a moral sense in the

* The result of the joint effort was the appearance, in 1814, of "A Compendium of the History of Ireland down to the Reign of George I." According to Mr. Rossetti, some passages in the work are from Shelley's pen, but Mr. Dowden is of opinion that the portion really written by Shelley was never printed.

† "I do not like Lord Fingall," wrote Shelley, "or *any* of the Catholic aristocracy. Their intolerance can be equalled by nothing but the hardy wickedness and falsehood of the Prince. My speech was misinterpreted. . ."

breasts of those who appear so unfitted for the high destination of their nature? . . . I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons, to whom in my fancy I had addressed myself; how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither!”

The celebrity conferred on Shelley by the publication of his pamphlets served to attract distressed persons of all kinds to him, and to bring him into contact with the deepest depths of poverty in Dublin.

“I cannot recount,” he writes to Miss Hitchener, March 10th, “all the horrible instances of unrestricted and licensed tyranny that have met my ears, scarcely those which have personally occurred to me. . . . I am sick of this city, and long to be with you and peace. The rich grind the poor into abjectness, and then complain that they are abject. They goad them to famine, and hang them if they steal a loaf.”

We may compare with the foregoing lines the gloomy picture of contemporary Ireland that has been traced for us by Mr. George Moore—a writer who is now at the head of the realistic school of novelists in England—in his lifelike study: “*Terre d’Irlande*.”*

The words of wisdom, and the paternal warnings of Godwin, who wrote: “Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood!”† helped

* One vol., Charpentier, 1887.

† “Say not with Macbeth :

I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o’er.”

to turn him from the enthusiastic enterprise to which he had devoted all his heartfelt and burning eloquence.

"It is indescribably painful," he writes to Godwin on March 18th, "to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite. . . . But I submit—I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust ; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary life, to take interest in its uninteresting details, I cannot. Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages."

On March 30th, 1812, when Shelley wrote those lines, and shaking the dust from his feet, prepared to quit that other Jerusalem unworthy of his labours and his love, he learned that in this world, as Baudelaire expresses it, "*l'action n'est pas la sœur du rêve*," and received the revelation of his real genius.

The true poet was born. Godwin, delighted to see in him no longer "a Robert Emmet,* an ephemeral meteor," but instead, a worker patiently watching the incessant though imperceptible progress of mankind, could now chant

* Shelley wrote, probably in Dublin, a poem entitled "*The Tomb of Robert Emmet*." Mr. Dowden gives us the two last verses :

No trump tells thy virtues—the grave where they rest
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame,
Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune carest,
Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er the daybeam is gone,
Unchanged, unextinguished, its lifespring will shine ;
When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,
She will smile through the tears of revival on thine.

his "Nunc dimittis" and write to him in these words:

The thing most to be desired, I believe, is to keep up the intellectual, and in some sense the solitary fermentation, and to procrastinate the contact and consequent action. This thing has its time: "In the hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

CHAPTER IX.

SHELLEY IN WALES—AT NANTGWILT—IN NORTH
DEVON—IN LONDON—AT TANYRALT—AT
LYNTON—LETTERS TO GODWIN—"QUEEN
MAB"—1812-1813.

A SHORT time previous to his departure from Dublin, Shelley had succeeded in becoming acquainted with the incorruptible Curran, and was invited to dinner at his house. The poet discovered, to his great mortification, that a celebrated patriot, when he has reached a certain age, can care for good living as much as for his country, and can unite devotion to liberty with a decided taste for license in speech. To such an one as Shelley, the brilliant talents of his host (whom Byron described as an "imagination machine, just as Piron was an epigram machine,") could not compensate for these faults. He wrote of him to Godwin in the following terms :

Curran is certainly a man of great abilities, but it appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love.

In short, though Curtan indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend.

Shelley left Ireland on April 4th, 1812. Before his departure, he despatched a box containing the remaining copies of his different pamphlets printed in Ireland, to his dear friend Miss Hitchener. This box was delayed at the Holyhead custom-house, and opened by a clerk who, on examining the contents, communicated with the Home Secretary, and some correspondence* ensued concerning it.

Among the papers it contained, we are already acquainted with the "Address" and "Proposals for an Association;" the "Declaration of Rights," the most revolutionary in tone of those seized by the police, was a mere copy of the French Declaration in 1789, and of that of Robespierre; the Code of the Republican policy is set forth in it in thirty-one articles, expressed with terseness, and sometimes with epigrammatic force.† The first article is headed: "Government has no Rights," and he echoes Rousseau in saying: "What the rich give to the poor, whilst millions are starving, is not a perfect favour, but an imperfect right."

Poetry, too, played a part in this arsenal of revolutionary weapons, in the shape of a ballad on "The Devil's Walk," a subject which had already been handled by Southey and Coleridge in common.

On April 14th the travellers arrived, after a week of wandering, in the neighbourhood of

* In one of the papers belonging to the correspondence and kept at the Record Office, Shelley is mentioned as a dangerous and most extraordinary man.

† There is an excellent article on this subject by Mr. Rossetti in the *Fortnightly Review*, January 7th, 1871.

Cwm Elan, where Shelley had passed some melancholy weeks the preceding year. There was an old house near by, situated on the picturesque stream, from which it took its name of Nantgwilt, which offered a comfortable resting-place, and the charm of beautiful scenery, too, to the romantic.

"The cheapness, beauty, and retirement," writes Shelley to Godwin, "make this place in every point of view desirable. Nor can I view this scenery—mountains and rocks seeming to form a barrier round this quiet valley, which the tumult of the world may never overleap—without associating *your* presence with the idea, that of your wife, your children, and one other friend to complete the picture which my mind has drawn to itself of felicity. Come to Wales. . . ."

We are now* embosomed in the solitude of mountains, woods, and rivers, silent, solitary, and old; far from any town, six miles from Rhayader, which is nearest. A ghost haunts the house, which has frequently been seen by the servants. We have several witches in our neighbourhood, and are quite stocked with fairies and hobgoblins of every description.

Ghosts of another kind haunted Shelley's imagination—melancholy recollections of his former visit to scenes, which now, owing to the brighter circumstances surrounding him, wore so different an aspect.

Nantgwilt . . . is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts which possessed it when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive.†

This retrospect of the past took such hold of Shelley, that, according to his habit whenever deeply moved, he gave it shape in verse: "The Retrospect: Cwm Elan, 1812." ‡

* Letter to Miss Hitchener, April 18th, 1812.

† Letter to Godwin, April 15.

‡ Published for the first time in Mr. Dowden's "Life of Shelley," Vol. I., p. 270.

But the fatality which seemed ever to pursue the poet, crying aloud to him as erstwhile to his "Wandering Jew," "On! on!" forbade any long enjoyment of the peaceful happiness of Nantgwilt. The serious illness of Harriet, and the distress caused to his friend Miss Hitchener by scandalous reports concerning herself and him, destroyed his delight in Cwm Elan. What! slander Portia! Slander their pure and ideal affection! And her father dared to forbid her to visit at Shelley's house!

You have agitated her mind until her frame is seriously deranged . . . you may destroy her by disease, but her mind is free; *that* you cannot hurt. . . . Fates give my Harriet health, give my Portia peace, and I will excuse . . . the rest.

"You are," he writes to Portia herself, "you are to my fancy as a thunder-riven pinnacle of rock, firm amid the rushing tempest and the boiling surge. Ay, stand for ever firm, and when our ship anchors close to thee, the crew will cover thee with flowers!"

We smile, as Mr. Dowden remarks, "at Shelley's boyish raptures;" but it was the same temperament and the same idealising imagination which, when matured and refined, gave to English poetry the rapture, swift and high, and the shining imagery of the "Epipsychidion."

Pecuniary embarrassments put an end to Shelley's project of settling himself in Wales. He was unable to provide the requisite six or seven hundred pounds. The travellers left Nantgwilt on June 11th and removed to Lynmouth in North Devon. There they dwelt for some weeks in a little cottage, being amply compensated for the poor accommodation by the beauty of the site and surrounding scenery.

It equals . . . Nantgwilt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than a thousand feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur.

The climate is so mild that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All "shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley," are here.

July 5th, 1812.

But Shelley could not enjoy these lovely scenes alone; he needed for the perfect appreciation of their beauty those friends of his soul, the great Godwin, the divine Portia. The latter, in accordance with his counsels, had overcome every obstacle, and was hastening to join him. The poet wished Godwin to be acquainted with so precious a treasure of Deism and Republicanism; and Miss Hitchener had accordingly called upon him on her way through London. The author of "Political Justice" received Shelley's friend as he would have received Shelley himself; nevertheless he allowed her to perceive a consciousness of his own superiority.

From what we know of Shelley's enthusiastic idolatry of Miss Hitchener, we may infer with what transports of mystic tenderness, with what ideal effusiveness he must have welcomed under his roof her whose coming he had hastened in the following words: "I have much to tell you about, innate passions, God, Christianity, etc.,"* The enchantment, alas! was of short duration! The immaculate angel soon became the "Brown Demon." So soon as Shelley, truly a spoilt child,

* It was agreed between the ladies, who disliked the name of Portia, that she should be called simply Bessy. Hogg gives the following description of Bessy, which does not appear to be overdrawn: "Miss Hitchener was tall and thin, bony and masculine, of a dark complexion, and the symbol of male wisdom, a beard, was not entirely wanting. She was neither young nor old, not handsome—not absolutely ill-looking. She had been a governess, and a schoolmistress, as was sufficiently indicated by a prim, formal, didactic manner and speech."

had his sublime plaything in his hands, he must needs find out what it was made of; then, the toy being broken, he flung the pieces to the winds.

But meanwhile the early Lynmouth days must be reckoned among the happiest of his life. "His love for Harriet," says Mr. Dowden, "was ardent, and unmarred by fleck or flaw;" and "Love," as he himself wrote at this period, "seems inclined to stay in his prison."* The hour of disenchantment with Miss Hitchener had not yet struck; he received letter upon letter from Godwin;†

* On the first of August was Harriet's birthday, and Shelley addressed to her a birthday sonnet, hitherto unpublished:

Ever as now with Love and Virtue's glow
 May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,
 Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow,
 Which force from mine such quick and warm return.

To this date also, Mr. Dowden thinks, we may ascribe an unpublished blank verse poem addressed to Harriet, which is a curious mixture of tenderness and of moral aspirations. The following lines form part of it:

Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,
 But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand
 Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds,
 Half frozen now; the frigid intercourse
 Of common souls lives but a summer's day;
 . . . But ours!

. . . Can those eyes
 Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart
 To purify its purity, e'er bend
 To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears?
 Never, thou second self! Is confidence
 So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt
 The mirror even of Truth? . . .
 Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude,
 Freedom, Devotedness, and Purity!
 That life my spirit consecrates to you.

† We regret we cannot give longer extracts from this interesting correspondence, of which the subject was mostly philosophy. One very remarkable letter, a formal pleading

books were sent for from London, to be perused and discussed with Bessy; and his mind was vigorously at work either with new pleas in prose on behalf of liberty of speech, or with enterprises of pith and moment in English verse.*

Shelley never missed an opportunity during his short life of raising his voice in favour of the liberties of the people, oppressed as they were by tyrannical power; he deemed interference with the right of free speech and a free press to be the worst encroachment on liberty; many a time he boldly defended those who had ventured to defy the resentment and wrath of the political inquisition on free-thought, which seemed to him to be a renewal of the *auto-da-fè* and the stake of the Middle Ages. In May, 1812, a man named Eaton, a London bookseller, was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment and to the pillory for publishing "a blasphemous libel on the Holy Scriptures," entitled, "The Age of Reason," Part III., by Paine. On June 11th, Shelley wrote to Godwin:

What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence? I do not mean to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates or Jesus Christ; still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him, is the same which brought them to an untimely end; still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and indeed have begun an outline of the address.

against classical education being restricted to the study of antiquity, will be found in the Appendix.

* To this period must be referred an unpublished fragment of three hundred lines entitled "The Voyage," and in all probability, thinks Mr. Dowden, another poem called "A Retrospect of Times of Old." Mr. Dowden thinks it likely that "Queen Mab" took a definite shape at Nantgwilt and at Lynmouth.

During his stay at Lynmouth, Shelley put the finishing touch to his outspoken pamphlet, addressed to the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Ellenborough.*

It breathes the same passionate eloquence as "Queen Mab," which he was then writing, taking refuge in poetry as in a sanctuary which "iron-hearted persecution" was unable to violate.

At the same period he was distributing his Irish pamphlets—"Proposals for an Association," "The Devil's Walk," and the "Declaration of Rights"—about Barnstaple, by the hands of Daniel Healey,† an Irishman in his service, who was consequently arrested on August 19th, and brought before the Mayor of Barnstaple. Healey was convicted of distributing printed pamphlets without the printer's name affixed, and was ordered to pay a fine of £200, or, in default, to be imprisoned for six months. There was also a rumour that the author and the printer of the letter to Lord Ellenborough would be prosecuted, and the alarmed printer is said to have destroyed the remaining copies. But such commonplace yet dangerous methods of propaganda were not enough for Shelley; his romantic fancy devised a means of publicity which no Attorney-General could reach—the elements were enlisted in his service; air and water became emissaries of the new gospel of humanity.

"Accordingly, we discover Shelley, accompanied by a tall foreign-looking female, on the Lynmouth

* "A Letter to Lord Ellenborough." "This letter," says Mr. Dowden, "has none of the majestic force of Milton's speech on behalf of liberty of unlicensed printing . . . but it has clearness and vigour, and is certainly superior in style to anything which Shelley had previously written."

† Known hitherto under the *alias* of Hill, Mr. Dowden has reinstated him in his right name. The Irishman was devoted to Shelley, and declared he would go through fire and water for him.

beach, pushing certain small boxes—well resined and waxed to keep out the water, and each with mast and sail—from the rocks, or watching from his boat a little flotilla of dark green bottles tightly corked, which rise and sink as the waves sway them seawards; or we see him in the twilight launching his little luminous balloons laden with truth and virtue, into the sky. On returning from such expeditions as these, Shelley would speed his envoys forward on their mission with the breath of good wishes winged by song."

We owe to Mr. Dowden two of these unpublished sonnets :

SONNET TO A BALLOON LADEN WITH KNOWLEDGE.

Bright ball of flame, that thro' the gloom of even
Silently takest thine ethereal way,
And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray,
Twinkling amid the dark-blue depths of Heaven,—
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that unquenchable is doomed to glow
A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb ;
A ray of courage to the opprest and poor ;
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar ;
A beacon in the darkness of the Earth ;
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRITISH CHANNEL.

Vessels of heavenly medicine ! may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore !
Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas !
And oh ! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
From yonder lovely throne, her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your emerald group
The fairest breezes of her west that blow.

Yes ! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul,
Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight,
Her heaven-born flame in suffering earth will light,
Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole.
And tyrant hearts with powerless envy burst
To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

Lord Sidmouth, at that time Secretary of State for the Home Department, was warned by an informer, named Henry Drake, of Shelley's movements, and caused him to be watched and followed. Secret reports were sent to him relating every action of the poet : Shelley had been seen in company with a woman throwing suspicious boxes into the sea ; one of these on being opened, was found to contain the "Declaration of Rights," and inside a floating bottle another person had found "The Devil's Walk." The Mayor of Barnstaple received instructions to watch the offender ; but the poet had escaped the snare, and had vanished from Lynmouth. He had been obliged to borrow the sum of four pounds, nine shillings.

Three weeks later, Godwin, in response to repeated invitations, reached Lynmouth on September 18th. Great was the disappointment of that patriarchal philosopher, who, as Hogg tells us, relying on the liberality of his host, had not brought sufficient money with him to defray the cost of his journey back to London, and now found himself short of cash in a strange place.

On leaving Lynmouth, Shelley had journeyed to South Wales, and installed himself at Tanyralt, near Tremadoc, Carnarvonshire. The cottage was picturesquely perched on a hill, beneath enormous rocks, and belonged to Mr. Madocks, an Oxford man, and Member of Parliament. It is "a cottage," he wrote to Hogg, "extensive and tasty enough for an Italian prince." Shelley's landlord, in common with all who knew him

intimately, was soon charmed with the character and genius of his tenant.

It would have been strange indeed, could Mr. Madocks have remained untouched by Shelley's enthusiastic admiration for the great works he was endeavouring to carry out. The little town of Tremadoc had been built by him on land reclaimed from the encroachments of the sea, and he was now endeavouring to reclaim five thousand acres more of submerged land by means of a vast embankment. Any project for furthering the welfare of mankind claimed Shelley's whole attention. He united his efforts with those of Mr. Madocks with the same enthusiasm that he had displayed in the Irish crusade. A strong tide having on one occasion destroyed part of the embankment, Shelley proposed at once to call a meeting, and raised a subscription, at the head of which he inscribed his own name for one hundred pounds. Moreover, he undertook to solicit aid from the neighbouring gentry, "in spite of their bigotry and prejudice," and with his three companions travelled to London, there to receive further subscriptions. (October 4th, 1812.)

There were two other great inducements to make the journey to London: to meet Godwin, and to see Hogg once more.

It is easy to guess with what affection the Socrates of Skinner Street must have received a first visit from his disciple, who, although hitherto unknown to, and separated by distance from him, seemed to be almost one of his own family. Godwin welcomed him as a friend or son, and a day seldom passed without long conferences between them on metaphysics, morals, politics, on spirit and matter, atheism, utility and truth, the clergy, the Church, or the characteristics of German thought and literature. Godwin's

young daughters must have looked on the novelist, the poet, the champion of Ireland, as a hero or demi-god. Shelley does not appear to have bestowed much notice on the two younger girls, Clare and Mary; he was most attracted by Mary Wollstonecraft's first-born daughter—poor Fanny Imlay!—a gentle and melancholy creature, who four years later was destined to follow her mother's example and drown herself in the Thames.*

Hogg was absent for the vacation, and Shelley awaited his return to London to renew a friendship so disastrously interrupted. The wound had been healed by time, and when they met again all the past was forgotten.

Shelley took the opportunity of the visit to London to rid his household of her whom he now called "the Brown Demon." His early illusion had been dispelled, and the poor Sussex schoolmistress now appeared as she really was, or even worse, a strong-minded but vulgar woman, an insupportable and ridiculous blue - stocking; and most absurd of all, she imagined herself a poet! Yet may not this delusion have been partly Shelley's own fault?† At a later period he used to relate, laughing till the tears ran down his face, that at Lynmouth Miss Hitchener had written an ode on the emancipation of her sex, the first line of which ran as follows :

All, all are men—women and all!

On her return to her school he undertook,

* A correct version of this occurrence is given by the Author in another place.

† Mr. Dowden quotes some lines of a poem by Miss Hitchener, which appeared in 1822, the year of Shelley's death, and "proves that its author, though not a poet, was a woman of some culture and vigour of mind."

somewhat ungraciously, to allow her an annuity of forty or fifty pounds, in order to repair as far as possible the injury he had done her.* And on December 3rd, he wrote to Hogg on the subject in these words:

The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and schoolmistress, must receive her stipend. . . . She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation where she was going on smoothly, and now she says that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity; a complete victim. . . . This is not all fact; but certainly she is embarrassed and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to obviate it. She is an artificial, superficial, ugly, hermaphrodite woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so great as after living for four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be were such a woman in Heaven? †

During his sojourn in London, Shelley formed an intimacy with Mr. Newton and his family, which was not without influence on the moral direction of his mind, and the connections he subsequently formed. Mr. Newton was an ardent vegetarian; not content with practising the system, he had just published an essay on its virtues, entitled, "A Return to Nature." Shelley was struck with the admirable health and beauty of Mr. Newton's children, who had been brought up on vegetarian principles. "They are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible

* Mr. Dowden says the sum was £100.

† With reference to this change in Shelley's opinions Mr. Dowden quotes in Miss Hitchener's favour the testimony of an acquaintance of Shelley's who saw her at her father's house after her return to Sussex. "She was sitting alone, with one of Shelley's works before her. Her fine black eye lighted up, her well-formed Roman countenance was full of animation, when I spoke of Shelley." She resumed her former profession, and conducted a girls' school with success. Her pupils spoke of her as "a high-principled, clever woman, with a remarkable capacity for teaching."

to conceive, their dispositions the most gentle and conciliating."

He perused the "Return to Nature," which he terms a "luminous and eloquent essay," and borrowed from it in great measure the arguments in favour of vegetarianism which he urges in one of the notes to "*Queen Mab*." His friendship with the Newtons confirmed him in the practice of the Pythagorean system, which he had begun in Ireland, and to which he ever afterwards adhered.

His departure from London was accelerated by financial embarrassments; and he left the metropolis without even taking leave of the Godwins,* and addresses the "miserable city" in a farewell poem, in which he praises enthusiastically the vales and hills of wild Cambria, the sole asylum, he thinks, of liberty and virtue. Mr. Dowden gives us part of the poem:

ON LEAVING LONDON FOR WALES.

Hail to thee, Cambria! for the unfettered wind
Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,
And tightening the soul's laxest nerves to steel.
True mountain Liberty alone may heal
The pain which Custom's obdurances bring,
And he who dares in fancy even to steal
One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring
Blots out the unholyest rede of worldly witnessing.
And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,
So soon forget the woe its fellows share?
Can Snowdon's Lethe from the freeborn mind
So soon the page of injured penury tear?
Does this fine mass of human passion dare
To sleep, unhonouring the patriot's fall,
Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear,
While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,
And Tyranny high-raised stern lowers on all?

* He apologises for the omission in a lively letter to Fanny, who had reproached him for his abrupt and uncivil departure.

No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales
 A heart so false to hope and virtue shield;
 Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales
 Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.
 For me! . . . The weapon that I burn to wield
 I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,
 That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field,
 Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,
 A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought,
 Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,
 That by the soul to indignation wrought
 Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene:
 Let me for ever be what I have been,
 But not for ever at my needy door
 Let misery linger speechless, pale, and lean.
 I am the friend of the unfriended poor.*
 Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

A certain amount of discouragement is revealed in the poet's verse, and perhaps a feeling of regret that even for a moment he should have subordinated the high interests of humanity to which his genius should be exclusively devoted, to a private enterprise of uncertain results.

He had failed of success in London with regard to the Tremadoc embankment, and perceived he had thoughtlessly engaged himself in an affair from which it would be best to withdraw, and return to poetry. His home, moreover, was full of charm: "When I come home to Harriet I am the happiest of the happy." His young wife identified herself to the utmost with his ideas and aspirations, studying various subjects under his direction, Latin

* Mr. Madocks bears witness to the truth of these words. "I have often heard Mr. Madocks dilate," writes Medwin, "on Shelley's numerous acts of benevolence, his relieving the distresses of the poor, visiting them in their humble abodes, and supplying them with food, and raiment, and fuel during the winter."

especially; she could already read some Odes of Horace, and purposed writing a Latin letter to Hogg. She had readily conformed to the Pythagorean system. Her fresh young voice, singing old Irish melodies, lent a charm to the winter evenings, and the anticipation of the birth of a child was an additional source of happiness. Shelley was thus independent of the society of his neighbours at Tremadoc, and wrote of them to Hookham the bookseller: "There is more philosophy in one square inch of your counter than in the whole of Cambria."

Two important events marked the latter part of Shelley's sojourn at Tanyralt—this acquaintance with Leigh Hunt and the completion of "*Queen Mab*."

Hunt had boldly attacked, in the *Examiner*, the character and private life of the Prince Regent, whom Shelley had described in his Irish pamphlets as forgetful of the teaching of the great Fox. Not satisfied with calling him *an Adonis of fifty*, Hunt had proved that that "delightful, wise, agreeable, virtuous, sincere and immortal Prince was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, a companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who had reached the age of fifty without acquiring any claim to gratitude from his country, or respect from posterity."

Thanks to Lord Ellenborough's charges to the jury, and notwithstanding the eloquent speeches on their behalf by their counsel (Brougham), Leigh Hunt and his brother were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred pounds each.

"To this imprisonment," says Hunt, "I owe my acquaintance with the friend of friends, Shelley. He wrote to me with a princely offer of help, which at that time I did not need."

Shelley wrote on the subject to his bookseller, Hookham, in February, 1813 :

I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on Hunt and his brother. . . . Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England.

Although I do not retract in the slightest degree my wish for a subscription for the widows and children of those poor men hung at York, yet this £1000 which the Hunts are sentenced to pay is an affair of more consequence. Hunt is a brave, a good, and an enlightened man. Surely the public, for whom Hunt has done so much, will repay in part the great debt of obligation which they owe the champion of their liberties and virtues ; or are they dead, cold, stone-hearted, and insensible—brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage ? . . .

I am rather poor at present ; but I have £20 which is not immediately wanted. Pray begin a subscription for the Hunts ; put my name down for that sum. . . . Oh ! that I might wallow for one night in the Bank of England !

"Queen Mab" is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which will be long and philosophical. You will receive it with the other poems.

"Queen Mab" is Shelley's first serious long poem, and it gives us the sum of his intellectual life up to that date.

Although "Queen Mab" marks a decisive step in Shelley's poetical career, he was conscious of its shortcomings and defects even while sending it for publication.

"My poems," he writes in January, 1813, "will, I fear, little stand the criticism even of friendship ; some of the later ones* have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are in a great measure abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred to government and religion. . . . One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of *fashionable literature*."

* The poems to which Shelley here alludes, and which he intended to publish in Ireland, are in a manuscript in his own handwriting, containing 2,822 lines. Mr. Dowden first disclosed to the world the existence of this manuscript.

"In spite of its various errors I am determined to give it to the world," he writes to Hookham on sending the manuscript. He orders the books to be in quarto, and on good paper, to attract the aristocracy. "They will not read it," he says, "but their daughters may."

It is certain that Shelley included "Queen Mab" among those of his poems that possessed little merit beyond the absence of vulgarity and the expression of the twofold hatred with which his soul was filled. Yet "Queen Mab" was more than this. It was a serious endeavour to establish on a philosophical basis his project of reformation for the world, which was the one passion of his life and the principal inspiration of his genius. It is very difficult to class this poem from a metaphysical point of view, in a defined and precise system with Hume or Spinoza. Neither the latter, nor Kant, ever strongly influenced Shelley, who was only beginning to read Spinoza when he put the finishing touches to his poem. In order fully to comprehend the influences under which he composed "Queen Mab," we must study the notes that display his philosophical knowledge, and expound didactically his views on physics and morals. Thus he quotes the fine lines from Ecclesiastes: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose."

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

And from Lucretius the admirable passage commencing,

Suave mari magno . . .

to justify his bold departure from the beaten track in which humanity strays far from the true way of

life. Rousseau supplies him with arguments in favour of the equality which ought to be established among men; La Place, Cabanis, and Bailly, suggest his astronomical and scientific views. He finds in Robinet's "*Système de la Nature*," which he himself translated, in Pliny the Elder, Lord Bacon, Locke, Hume, Newton, and Condorcet, proofs of that scientific Atheism which he opposes to the absurdities of theology.

The celebrated work by Volney, "*Les Ruines*"—a popular exposition, in poetical and biblical language, of the eighteenth-century philosophy—suggested to him the plan, and even the framework, of his poem. Volney's genius, who looses the mortal coil of his traveller, and bears him, like a light vapour, into the upper regions, becomes the fairy Mab, the personification of the poetic imagination, revealing to the spirit of Ianthe,* separated from her body, the history of Good and Evil on the earth, and the future destiny of regenerated mankind.

If Nature (or God) is innocent of the evils of humanity, then man himself must be the principle of those evils; and here Shelley contrasts innocent Nature with its opposite, Custom, the very source of hypocrisy, depravity, religion, and tyranny; of money, war, prostitution, and all the crime and suffering in the world. All this, we shall be told, is declamatory and vulgar. We may admit it to be declamatory—Shelley is partly open to that reproach—but certainly it is not vulgar; for Shelley, even when uttering the truisms of metaphysical and moral commonplace, always displayed originality and vigour of form and expression which take hold upon you, and

* A Greek name, signifying *violet*, taken by Shelley from Ovid's "*Metamorphoses*,"

"Potiturbæ suâ Iphis Ianthe."

This was the name of his eldest daughter.

make you forget whatever is redundant, exaggerated, or inflated in his style. We are quite of Mr. Rossetti's opinion on this matter :

The part of "Queen Mab" which has some considerable amount of promise, and even of positive merit at times, is the declamatory part—the passages of flexible and sonorous blank verse in which Shelley boils over against kings or priests, or the present misery of the world of man, and in acclaiming augury of an era of regeneration. These passages, with all their obvious literary crudities and imperfections, are, in their way, of real mark, and not easily to be overmatched by other poetic writing of that least readable sort, the didactic-declamatory.

With the exception of M. de Lamennais's "*Paroles d'un Croyant*," we know of nothing that can be compared with them. Mr. Dowden has admirably defined the tendencies and spirit of "Queen Mab" in the following words :

Seldom before in English poetry had the unity of Nature and the universality of law—the idea of a cosmos—been expressed with more precision or a more ardent conviction. Seldom before in poetry had the vast and ceaseless flow of Being—restless, yet subject to a constant law of evolution and development—been so vividly conceived. Nature, or as Shelley preferred to say, the Spirit of Nature, acting necessarily, and at present producing indifferently good and evil, giving birth alike to the hero, the martyr, the bigot, the tyrant, poisonous serpent, and innocent lamb, yet tends unconsciously upward to nobler developments, purging itself of what is weak and base. Shelley's spirit, which circles half mournfully, half exultingly, above the ruins of the past, which rises on the wing, and screams at sight of all the oppressions and frauds done under the sun in this our day, flies to the future and embraces it with a lover's joy. . . . That his ideal of the future golden age may be smiled at by common sense as impracticable and impossible, need give us small offence. In following the sun he loses his way in a radiant cloudland ; yet still, amid bright voluminous folds of error, he is on the track of the sun.

Shelley himself, however, has passed judgment on this poem more severely than any other critic has done. "Queen Mab" having been surreptitiously

printed in London in 1821, while Shelley was in Italy, he wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Examiner*:

TO THE "EXAMINER."

. June 22nd, 1821.

A poem, entitled "Queen Mab," was written by me at the age of eighteen—I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit. I have not seen this production for several years; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression, and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom.

If the publication of "Queen Mab" was not, as Shelley feared, injurious to the cause of liberty in general, it was injurious at least to his own liberty, for it became the pretext of all the persecution to which he was thenceforth subjected. Few indeed were the chosen spirits who could distinguish between the man and the Atheist in the poem, and divine the great future poet in the author of "Queen Mab."

In the summer of 1820, Trelawney, who had not at that time heard of Shelley, was at Lausanne, and made the acquaintance of one of those few booksellers whose knowledge extends beyond indexes and catalogues. This man read and understood the books he sold in every European tongue. On one occasion Trelawney found him sitting under Gibbon's acacia trees and absorbed in the perusal of an English book. "I can read your modern English poets," said the bookseller, "your Byron, Scott, and Moore, and understand them as I walk along; but I have got hold of a book by one now that makes me stop and take breath. It

was lying among a lot of new English books that I had not yet opened, when a priest happened to pass by and took it up. After a brief glance at the notes he exploded in wrath, shouting out: 'Infidel! Jacobin! Leveller! Nothing can stop this spread of blasphemy but the stake and the faggot; the world is retrograding into accursed heathenism and anarchy!'

"When the priest had departed, I took up the small book he had thrown down, saying: 'Surely there must be something here worth tasting.' You know the proverb: No person throws a stone at a tree that does not bear fruit. It was Shelley's 'Queen Mab.' The fruit is crude to my taste, but well flavoured; it requires a strong stomach to digest it; the writer is an enthusiast and has the true spirit of a poet; he aims at regenerating humanity, not, like Byron and Moore, pulling it down. They say he is but a boy, and this his first offering; if that be true, we shall hear of him again."

History has not transmitted to us the name of the excellent bookseller of Lausanne, but it is certain the he possessed more sense and critical acumen than all the English Reviewers of the period put together,

CHAPTER X.

SHELLEY IN DUBLIN—IN LONDON—AT BRACKNELL, EDINBURGH, WINDSOR—HIS SEPARATION FROM HARRIET—1813-1814.

ON March 9th, 1813, Shelley was once more in Dublin. He had suddenly left Tanyralt, borrowing £20 from Hookham for the purpose, in consequence of a strange adventure which has much exercised the minds of his biographers. On the night of February 26th, a night of storm and rain, his assassination had been attempted under highly mysterious and improbable circumstances. Most of Shelley's biographers are of opinion that the nocturnal attack was but a figment of his imagination, one of those hallucinations which, according to Peacock, would be best treated by "three well-peppered mutton chops." But the details furnished by numerous extant letters are too circumstantial to admit of such an explanation. Equally inadmissible is the theory of his enemies that he himself had invented the story to facilitate his departure without paying his debts. However this may be, Shelley left Tanyralt in all haste for Dublin, where Jack Lawless received him with open arms.

Hogg, on learning the abrupt departure of the poet, relinquished his promised visit to Tanyralt and followed his friend to Dublin. But on arriving

at Shelley's address in Cuffe Street, he learned from Mr. Lawless, the owner of the house, that his lately-arrived guests had taken flight for Killarney. Hogg, after inspecting the Irish capital, took his way back philosophically enough to London, where he was joined by Shelley a few days later. The guardian angel had been left behind with the books.

"I found Bysshe and Harriet," writes Hogg, "in a hotel at the West End; they were both well and in good spirits; the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever. They expressed much regret at my fruitless expedition, and most kindly condoled with me. . . . They complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and hideous improbity of their long and barbarous course. Their wearied souls were brimful of the recollections of discomfort and miseries endured at Killarney; where, that they might be more thoroughly wretched, they had occupied a cottage situated upon an island in the lake. . . .

"Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes; of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds; how vessels were swamped and sunk in a moment; and he related with implicit faith tales savouring somewhat of Milesian exaggeration and credulity. . . . He made no secret of his satisfaction" at having got rid of Eliza, "but often gave vent to his feelings with his accustomed frankness and energy. The good Harriet smiled in silence, and looked very sly; she did not dare to express her joy, if she really rejoiced at the absence of her affectionate and tiresome sister. . . . The deliverance was of brief duration, surprisingly brief, for in an incredibly short space of time Eliza reappeared and resumed her sovereign functions. . . . Harriet gave visible promise of being about to provide an heir for an ancient and illustrious house; and, like all little women, she looked very large upon the occasion. She was in excellent voice, and fonder than ever of reading aloud; she promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste; she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading commenced. Sir William Drummond's 'Academical Questions,' Smith's 'Theory of Moral Sentiments,' some of Bishop Berkeley's works, Southey's 'Chronicle of the Cid,' had taken the place of 'Telemachus,' 'Belisarius,' Volney's 'Ruins,' and the other works which she had formerly read to me."

On reaching London, Shelley, who had incurred further debts for his travelling expenses, endeavoured in vain to conciliate his father by letter. After wasting many precious hours in useless negotiations with Mr. Timothy Shelley's advisers, he removed from his hotel, which was ill suited for poetical composition, and took lodgings in Half-moon Street.

"There was a little projecting window," says Hogg, "in Half-moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes; so that Mrs. Newton said he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song. . . . The little room on the first floor . . . soon grew into a miniature library; books were arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace, . . . on tables and chairs and heaped up under tables in confusion. . . . In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin . . . translation of the works of Emmanuel Kant—the leaves uncut."

Hogg and Shelley had resumed their old habits of 1811, walking, studying, and arguing together; and, as in former times, Hogg often dined at his friend's table. The nature of the repast was the only change, but Hogg had little liking for vegetarianism. He was not indifferent to the comforts of life; he was accustomed to them, and could not recall without regret the pleasant Oxford times, that University "where," he says, "one was forced, whether or no, to live comfortably in spite of oneself." He thought all young ladies angelic, but never more so than when handing you a large cup of strong, good tea. Shelley's frugal fare was not to his taste; he could not, like his friend, rush into the first baker's shop when hungry, buy a loaf, and eat it as he strode along, with the occasional addition of raisins. A sweet panada, that Shelley had learned how to prepare from

a French lady, and that he thought delicious, was particularly odious to Hogg. He deplored the culinary inexperience of the good Harriet, who once in her life had had the opportunity of learning how to make tea-cakes from Mrs. Southey, at Keswick, but had not learned, and who, when asked what was to be for dinner, would reply: "Whatever you please."

"Once," says Hogg, "I had dropped a word, a hint about a pudding. 'A pudding,' Bysshe said dogmatically, 'is a prejudice.' I have wished that the converse of the proposition were true, and that a prejudice was a pudding, and then, according to the judgment of my more enlightened young friends, I should never have been without one. . . . Our only resource against absolute starvation was tea."*

Hogg endeavoured, though vainly, to introduce Shelley into his own circle—the official world, the world of fashion, and society. As he was on terms of friendship with the Countess of Oxford, one of the leaders of fashion, he spoke to her in warm praise of his friend, and she expressed a desire to make Shelley's acquaintance, but Shelley probably declined the honour. Hogg also wished to make Shelley acquainted with a man who, at that time, enjoyed a great reputation for eloquence and learning, the celebrated Dr. Samuel Parr, a Liberal divine (we have had many such in France since that epoch).† But this too failed, for Bysshe had not the

* Tea was always Shelley's favourite beverage ; he praised it poetically in his Letter to Maria Gisborne, and jestingly called himself in one sense a *theist*.

† Hogg says amusingly with reference to this subject : "A Whig divine is placed in a very critical position, between two fires ; he has to try and make his way, to creep to the paradise of a bishoprick—a long and narrow bridge, narrow as the edge of a razor ; he must not compromise his orthodoxy on the one hand, or his Liberality on the other."

smallest inclination for the society of a pedagogue wrapped up in his own infallibility; "to ask him to converse with a schoolmaster, was like telling him to go back to Eton and have a pleasant chat with old Keate, or with the Oxford bigwigs."

Shelley preferred the society of ladies who would learn from him, to that of reverend divines. "He was an especial favourite of the fair sex; he was cherished as the apple of beauty's eye; he was often called by names of endearment, such as Ariel, and Oberon, and spoken of by the ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Fairyland, and under other affectionate titles. Elegant society was deemed to be his proper element, and to adorn it his natural vocation; to bring him into this sphere, and keep him in it, was the anxious care of several amiable and charming creatures." But this was not always easy of accomplishment.

As capricious and elusive as a sylph or gnome, Shelley easily forgot, in some day-dream or poetic vision, his promises and engagements. "When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies with 'Behold your King!' to be caressed, courted, admired, and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt, slip away, steal out, creep off" . . . vanish like a magician. Hogg compares his strange disappearances to those of a goat, who is said to pass one hour of the twenty-four every day in the infernal regions:

I have sometimes seen him standing a long while watching a goat patiently, and following it, for I had related the superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and pleased him prodigiously; and he would eye a goat, that came unexpectedly towards him, eagerly, and inquire with penetrating asking glances, "What news from Hades?"

If he was in company with two or three young ladies at

bedtime, they would continue to sit with him, hearing him and asking him questions. He took no note of time, and never thought of retiring himself, and the quiet hours of night glided away like moments. . . . Sometimes the conversation was prolonged to cockcrow, and terminated with a walk and breakfast. The mammas were obliged to intervene and despatch the young Adonis to his bed. . . . Never was so potent a spell, so wonderful a charm, exercised by any other individual, however gifted. What in the world did Bysshe say to his charmed and charming watchwomen? I have often essayed—perhaps with a profane hand, and therefore in vain—to raise the veil that covered the face of the mystical Isis. . . . I have asked again and again the fair interlocutresses for some samples of the nightly dialogues, but I never obtained more than general expressions of vague delight. . . . I have often wished that a shorthand writer had been placed behind a screen during Bysshe's nightly colloquies, to catch and secure for ever on paper a philosophical apocalypse of which the duration was unhappily so transient. What a delightful and precious appendix to an imperfect biography would the notes of the shorthand writer afford!

One day Hogg and Shelley were invited to attend a conference of ladies zealous for the emancipation of their sex. The subject of debate was the important question of stays. Hogg alone presented himself. On a table covered with green baize were exhibited plaster casts, prints, etchings, and a rabbit cut open so as to expose the interior, including the lungs. The subject under discussion was the injurious effect of stays on women. The lecturer having demonstrated her thesis upon the casts, and the rabbit, and numerous exhibits of crooked shoulders, curved spines, and contracted chests, addressed herself to Hogg: "Have I not plainly proved that Providence did not intend us to wear stays?" "I am not very competent to decide the question," replied Hogg, "but I am fully convinced, and you have fully proved, that Providence never intended a buck rabbit to wear stays." "Is it possible the rabbit is not a doe?" said the poor lady, quite confounded. A long

silence ensued ; the fair lecturer was evidently perplexed as to the sex of her anatomical subject.

When she had recovered herself, Shelley became the topic of conversation, the traitorous Shelley who had promised to be present at the conference and had failed to keep his word. The fair lecturer spoke of him with animation and enthusiasm ; if he would but speak out clearly on the great, the important subject of stays, the decision of such an intellect as his would instantly close the discussion. Not another pair of stays would be bought or worn in all Europe !

Shelley was beginning to found a school. A band of believers in human perfectibility and in the Millennium were ready to be his disciples, to the great amusement of Hogg, who bespoke for his share in the New Jerusalem "the first floor in a commodious house hollowed out of one huge emerald." To which Shelley replied sadly : "You laugh at everything. I am convinced that there can be no entire regeneration of mankind until drollery has disappeared from the world !"

"Queen Mab," printed at the end of May, 1813, and distributed among Shelley's friends, had a certain success in London. Hogg tells us that strangers of both sexes forced their way into the Shelleys' lodgings to make the acquaintance of the poet. Enthusiastic vegetarians, religious reformers, unsuccessful poets with suicidal mania, melancholy and dreamy women, bores of all sorts, intruded their presence and were passed on to Hogg by the poet. "It was more than intrusion, it was *obtrusion*, and the word is not strong enough. One person would give Italian lessons to Harriet, another lessons in Hebrew or Arabic to Eliza ; a still greater number forced themselves in without excuse or pretext."

Among their eccentric and extraordinary visitors was a certain Knight of Malta, Sir James

Lawrence by name, who had acquired celebrity as the author of a philosophical novel entitled "The History of the Nairs." This rose-coloured tale of India, "too rose-coloured," says Hogg, "too much like Tom Moore's honey-dew," became a rage with the Shelleys; even Eliza pronounced it to be a delightful book. Shelley was greatly impressed by it, and more fully convinced than ever of the immorality of legal marriage.

One of Shelley's most familiar haunts was the house of Mr. Newton, where he was received as belonging to the family.* The author of "A Return to Nature" was not satisfied with leading mankind back to Nature by the practice of the Pythagorean diet, but to this he added an Eden-like absence of attire, and carried it out in his own family.

"On a Sunday, in the summer," writes Hogg, "we took a walk together, wandering about, as usual, for a long time without plan or purpose. About five o'clock Bysshe stopped suddenly at the door of a house in a fashionable street, ascended the steps hastily, and delivered one of his superb bravura knocks.

"'What are we going to do here?'

"'It is here we dine.'

"He placed me before him, that I might enter first, as the stranger; the door was thrown wide open, and a strange spectacle presented itself. There were five naked figures in the passage hastening to meet us. The first was a boy of twelve years, the last a little girl of five; the other three children, the two eldest of them being girls, were of intermediate ages, between the two extremes. As soon as they saw me, they uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and ran

* Mrs. Newton's daughter says: "My mother, who was uncommonly musical (indeed, as Dussek said himself, his most gifted and best pupil), often passed her evenings playing with two of the first-rate musicians in London, viz., Solomon and another. Dear Shelley, instead of listening to the trios, would take us children into a corner, and there in a low and sepulchral voice tell us stories of ghosts and goblins to which we listened with fixed interest and attention."

wildly upstairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the Patriarch's vision indicate. From the window of the nursery at the top of the house the children had seen the beloved Shelley—had scampered downstairs in single file to welcome him ; me, the kill-joy, they had not observed. I was presented to a truly elegant family, and I found everything in the best taste, and was highly gratified with my reception, and with the estimable acquisition to the number of my friends. Nothing was said about the first strange salutation, nor did I venture to inquire what it signified. After dinner, Bysshe asked why the children did not come into the room to the dessert, as usual. The lady of the house coloured slightly, and said Shelley should see them by-and-by, in the nursery, but they did not dare to show themselves in the dining-room. They were all too much ashamed at having been seen, as they were, so unexpectedly, by a stranger ! Nothing more transpired to clear up the mystery of their nudity. At subsequent visits, the whole system was unfolded. . . . In order to prepare mankind for the happy impending restoration of perfect and universal nudity, children ought to be accustomed at an early age to be, at least occasionally, naked. . . . The mistress of the family assured us that she frequently remained for hours without her clothes, and derived much advantage from the complete exposure to the air. She never seemed to have much the matter with her ; and in imaginative persons fancy sways their feelings and convictions. 'I rose early this morning, and having locked myself into my dressing-room, or undressing-room, I remained for three hours stark-naked. I am all the better for it, I assure you ; I always am. I feel so innocent during the rest of the day !' . . . I gained some credit by communicating that I had sometimes nakedised, under the authority and by the advice of the celebrated Dr. Franklin, who wrote with earnestness in commendation of air-baths, for so he called and esteemed the remaining naked for some hours in the early morning. . . . Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me ; before Bysshe they often did. It is for his credit's sake that I state it. I was of the earth, earthy ; he was of the heaven, heavenly ;—I was a worldling ; he had already returned to Nature, or rather he had never quitted her. He was a pure spirit, in the Divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel ; the peace-breathing, lily-bearing annunciator. Whether the charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocence, as she was

wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine; it is, at all events, certain that she never did so."

At the Newtons' Shelley also made the acquaintance of a lady who for a time profoundly influenced his life and intellect: this was Madame de Boinville, Mrs. Newton's sister. They were the daughters of Mr. Collins, a wealthy planter at St. Vincent, and a staunch admirer of the new France. Madame de Boinville had adopted and even exceeded the Liberal views of her father, wearing a red sash, and calling herself a child of the Revolution. Among the Constitutional *émigrés* who frequented her father's house she had noticed one who, although still a young man, had played no insignificant part in the early days of the Revolution. M. de Boinville, who had been formerly a *fermier-général*, and a friend of La Fayette and André Chénier, was reduced to poverty by the emigration. He won the affections of the young Republican lady, and they had been married by the Gretna Green blacksmith, previous to a more formal ceremony. Under the Consulate, M. de Boinville returned to France. Madame de Boinville accompanied him, and suffered much annoyance from the Imperial police. It is even related that, on the occasion of one of her journeys between Paris and London, she was taken prisoner at the Hague, but her jailer was so impressed by her beauty that he allowed her to escape. M. de Boinville accepted service under Napoleon, and received a high appointment in the Commissariat of the Grand Army. He died at Wilna in 1813. His widow was still suffering from the shock of bereavement when she first became acquainted with Shelley. Her troubled life had early whitened her hair,* and the contrast between

* The above sketch of the Boinvilles is taken from Mr. Dowden, who derives it from Mr. Thomas Constable's "Mémorial of the Rev. C. A. Chastel de Boinville."

her snow-white locks and her youthful countenance reminded Shelley of the mysterious spinner in Southey's "Thalaba," Maimuna, by whose name he used to call her :

Her face was as a damsel's face,
And yet her hair was gray.

It is easy to understand how such a woman must have influenced Shelley.

The recollection of the enchantress lasted much longer than his intimacy with her in London. In 1819 he wrote from Rome to his friend Peacock concerning Madame de Boinville and her daughter Cornelia :

So you know the Boinvilles? I could not help considering Mrs. B., when I knew her, as the most admirable specimen of a human being I had ever seen. Nothing earthly ever appeared to me more perfect than her character and manners. It is improbable that I shall ever meet again the person whom I so much esteemed, and still admire. I wish, however, that when you see her, you would tell her that I have not forgotten her, nor any of the amiable circle once assembled round her. . . . Cornelia, though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellencies ; and certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable and more sincere. It was hardly possible for a person, of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections, to be quite sincere and constant.

Besides the charm of their delightful companionship, Shelley's friends furnished him with a new source of intellectual and literary enjoyment. Mrs. Boinville and her daughter Cornelia initiated him into the language of Dante and Tasso, and, under their guidance, he threw himself into the study of Italian with his habitual ardour for any intellectual pursuit. With his friend Hogg he read "*La Gerusalemme Liberata*."

"With mingled feelings," says the latter, "of pleasure and regret we both quitted the graceful, tender, pious epic,

being in our hearts more than half Crusaders, and not altogether indisposed to enlist under the consecrated banners of Godfrey."

Ariosto fascinated Shelley; he eagerly devoured the "*Orlando Furioso*," returning to it constantly, reading it again and again; while Hogg was progressing slowly and methodically with the aid of grammar and dictionary, Shelley read the forty-four cantos of the "*Orlando*" several times. Dante was postponed. A melancholy female friend, who found consolation for her imaginary sufferings only in the poetry of Petrarch, read with Shelley the "*Canzoni*" of that great master of lyric verse; he drank with delight at the pure and ideal spring, while Hogg, to the horror of the lady and her disciple, ridiculed the platonic passion of the stout canon of Padua, who sang of love and kissed his maid-servant between a good breakfast and a better dinner.

At the end of June, 1813, a babe was born to Shelley, a little daughter, to whom he gave the name of *Ianthe Elizabeth*. Hogg gives us to understand that in Harriet's composition there was more of vanity and egotism than of maternal affection:

I often asked Harriet to let me see her little girl, but she always made some excuse. She was asleep, being dressed, or had gone out, or was unwell. The child had some blemish, though not a considerable one, in one of her eyes; and this, I believe, was the true and only reason why her mother did not choose to exhibit her. She could not bear, herself a beauty, that I should know (such was her weakness) that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful.

Shortly afterwards it became necessary to operate on the little *Ianthe* for a tumour. Against the wish of the surgeon, Harriet insisted on being present, and watched the progress of the operation without a sign of emotion. The

surgeon declared subsequently that he had never met a woman like her, that she must have been altogether without feeling.*

Hogg says that Shelley had no affection for his child and took no interest in her ; but Peacock, who is a faithful witness to that epoch in the poet's life, gives us a different and more credible account. "He was extremely fond of his child," he writes, "and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. His song was 'Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani' . . . it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful ; . . . he was pre-eminently an affectionate father." Mr. Dowden has transcribed for us a precious record of Shelley's love for his little Ianthé, an unpublished sonnet, written in September, 1813, three months after her birth :

TO IANTHE.

I love thee, Baby, for thine own sweet sake :
 Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,
 Thy tender frame so eloquently weak,
 Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake ;
 But more, when o'er thy fitful slumber bending,
 Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,
 Whilst love and pity in her glances blending
 All that thy passive eyes can feel impart ;
 More, when some feeble lineaments of her
 Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,
 As with deep love I read thy face, recur ;
 More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom,
 Dearest when most thy tender traits express
 The image of thy mother's loveliness.

It was then (July, 1813) that, on his mother's invitation, and in the absence of Mr. Timothy

* Ianthé Shelley married Mr. Esdaile, and died in 1876. Mr. Dowden defends Harriet from Hogg's censure.

Shelley and his sisters, Shelley saw his birth-place, Field Place, for the last time. He stayed there for some days incognito, under the name of Captain Jones, wearing, when out of doors, the uniform of a young officer who was then quartered at Horsham. Captain Kennedy has left us in a long letter his impressions of the poet :

. . . I found him with his mother and two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindness, as if he had known me from childhood, and at once won my heart. . . . The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice ; it looked as if new. "Well," said he, "it is an old black coat which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar." . . . He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm. He said that he once thought the surrounding atmosphere was peopled with the spirits of the departed.

He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity ; one evening he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight as a medium of association ; the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, which seemed to absorb him ; it was an exceedingly simple air, which I understand his earliest love (Harriet Grove) was wont to play for him. He soon left us, and I never saw him after, but I can never forget him. He was an amiable, gentle being.

Shortly before this visit Shelley had left London, in order to establish himself less expensively in a little cottage called High Elms. It was situated at Bracknell, in Berkshire, not far from Eton, and in the neighbourhood of the Newtons and "Maimuna"; and to High Elms came with him Thomas Love Peacock,* one of

* Both as poet and satirical novelist, Peacock deserves attention, and Shelley's high opinion of his talents and

his most beloved friends, and worthy, both in intellect and heart, of Shelley's affection. Their intimacy dated from the previous year, at Cwm Elan, became closer still at Bracknell, and lasted without a cloud unto the end. At a time when Peacock was in difficulties Shelley made him an allowance of £100 a year, and continued to express the warmest feelings of friendship for him, even after his own departure from England.

Shelley came of age while at Bracknell. His pecuniary condition continued to be deplorable; there was an accumulation of debts, and even a risk of arrest as an insolvent debtor, which his father privately averted. In October, however, he found himself compelled to resort to post-obit bonds in order to raise money.

But while awaiting the settlement of his affairs, he resolved to revisit the scenes which had witnessed the early days of his union with Harriet; his friends at Keswick,* the Calverts, and Edinburgh. Peacock was of the party. Although Shelley did not find in Peacock the perfect sympathy of ideas and aspirations that he would have desired, he recognised an agreeable and intellectual companion in his new friend, and also a scholar who was neither superstitious nor dogmatical.

He returned to London in December, and soon afterwards hired a furnished house at Windsor, at no great distance from Bracknell and the Boinvilles. Throughout these incessant wanderings he continued to devote himself to varied and serious study. He read Tacitus, the

character is not his least claim to posthumous appreciation. There is an excellent article on Peacock in the *British Review* for January, 1874.

* Just at this time Southey had accepted the Poet-Laureateship, and was accused by the *Examiner* and other Liberal journals of apostasy.

philosophical works of Cicero, "one of the finest characters the world has ever produced," La Place's "System of the World," and Grenville's Homer, in two Russia-bound volumes.

"It would be a curious problem," says Hogg, "to calculate how many times he read the whole through. He devoured in silence . . . often by firelight . . . and he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was any one at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity and animation . . . nor would he cease until he reached the end of the book, and then, closing it . . . and lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heartfelt pleasure, 'Hah!' remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration."

The outcome of his philosophical studies in 1813, was a remarkable little book written in the form of a dialogue between a Deist and a Christian, and entitled, "A Refutation of Deism," which appeared early in 1814. Shelley very subtly places the refutation of Christianity in the mouth of the Deist, and that of Deism in the mouth of the Christian; the theosophist demolishes Christianity, whereas the Christian Eusebius, by proving that there is no middle position between Atheism and Christianity, is merely a disguised Atheist demolishing Deism. While thus developing the arguments in the notes to "Queen Mab," the dialogue (which, moreover, was only addressed to the elect few) shows a considerable advance both in style and thought. The latter is more elevated, more self-sustained, stronger, less aggressive, and less declamatory. Mr. Dowden points out as particularly noteworthy, Shelley's criticism of the argument from Design in Nature. He brings us to this conclusion: "That our ignorance alone incapacitates us from referring every phenomenon, however unusual, minute, or complex, to the laws of motion and the properties of matter; and it is an egregious offence against

the first principles of reason, to suppose an immaterial creator of the world, *in quo omnia moventur sed sine mutua passione*, which is equally a superfluous hypothesis in the mechanical philosophy of Newton, and an useless excrescence on the inductive logic of Bacon."

Weary of incessant wanderings, and probably in accordance with the wise counsels of Maimuna,* Shelley seemed inclined to rest for a time, while continuing to urge an arrangement on his father, which would relieve him from his pecuniary embarrassments. He enjoyed the desired rest in long visits to his Bracknell friends in the early part of 1814.

On resuming his momentarily interrupted correspondence with Hogg, he writes to him from Bracknell on March 16th:

I have been staying with Mrs. Boinville for the last month. I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combined, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home, for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to everything but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred.

My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I

* "Seriously," she writes to Hogg in March, 1814, "I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to the latter, which I applaud, and shall second with all my might. . . . He is seeking a house close to us. . . ."

live here like the insect that sports in a transient sunbeam, which the next cloud shall obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know :

“Pleasures are like poppies spread :
 You seize the flower—the bloom is fled ;
 Or, like the snow, falls in the river,
 A moment white—then lost for ever.”

Eliza is still with us—not here, but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading Beccaria, “*Dei delitti e pene*.” His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read Beccaria, and Dumont's Bentham. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought :

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast ;
 Thy gentle words stir poison there ;
 Thou hast disturbed the only rest
 That was the portion of despair !
 Subdued to Duty's hard control,
 I could have borne my wayward lot :
 The chains that bind this ruined soul
 Had cankered them, but crushed it not.

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream,

which passes away at the cold, clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu.

This despairing letter throws a light on the state of Shelley's mind, and prepares us for the abrupt catastrophe which was impending. Shelley's home had become a hell.

The hour of parting was at hand. Ever since the autumn of 1813 serious differences of opinion had caused a coolness between Shelley and Harriet. His sonnet to Harriet on her birthday in September is very unlike that one he had addressed to her the preceding year. As Mr. Dowden, who first published it, remarks, "there is something in it of the strangeness and sadness of sunset," and the little rift in their love is already perceptible :

EVENING. TO HARRIET.

O thou bright sun ! beneath the dark blue line
Of western distance that sublime descendest,
And gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And over cobweb, lawn, and grove, and stream
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
Till calm earth, with the parting splendour bright,
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream ;
What gazer now with astronomic eye
Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere ?
Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly
The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,
And turning senseless from thy warm caress
Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

Dissensions, sooner or later, were inevitable ; it was in the nature of things that they should occur. There was too great an incompatibility of education, intellect, temper, and character in the wedded pair for life in common not to become suddenly, at a given moment, hateful and intolerable. Medwin was surprised, not at their

eventual separation, but that they for so long a period "dragged a chain, of which each link was an additional torture." Far be it from us to throw a stone at the good Harriet whom Hogg and Peacock have depicted in such brilliant colours; she paid dearly for the thoughtlessness with which she threw herself into the poet's arms; while Shelley's fault had been that of entering too lightly on so great a venture, and of mistaking his own generous sympathy for love. When on the point of uniting himself to Harriet he had yielded too easily to the impulse of his heart, in spite of reason, which called aloud :

Hear it not, Percy, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

And hell had come. He had doubtless persuaded himself that, by the mild and eloquent teaching of love, he should bestow intellect and soul on the beautiful doll, and raise her to his own level; but he had failed. He had learnt that she could not rise to his height; that she was deficient in the refinement and delicacy he would fain have found in the companion of his life; that her heart was narrow and cold, inaccessible to the great passions that filled his own, and incapable of even faintly realising the ideal he had made to himself of love. In a few terrible words he has summed up his grievances against Harriet:

Every one must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.

In place of a Mary Wollstonecraft, or even of a Madame Boinville, he had found in Harriet a mere woman, more addicted to feminine vanity, and to the comforts and luxuries of life, than to the ideal delights of poetry and philanthropy. For a time, indeed, she had striven to kindle the

sacred fire, to stammer the mystic diction of philosophy; but the great words sounded untrue from her lovely lips, and seemed to be accompanied by a smile of bright incredulity. She had allowed herself to join in Peacock's laugh at Shelley for the enthusiasm with which he held the impracticable theories that he believed to be of the highest importance to the happiness and perfectibility of the human race. She had ridiculed the humanitarian and French sentimentality that reigned in Maimuna's circle, and her heart, albeit not a warm one, had felt a sting of jealousy at the place held by that enchantress in her husband's affections. In or before the first moments of motherhood, Harriet had seen the mirage of earlier days fade away, and had found herself among the realities of daily life. She no longer read aloud, and Shelley ceased to take any interest in her studies. If we may trust Peacock; the disputes between the pair arose principally from two causes: first, that Harriet had delegated her tenderest office towards her babe to a hired nurse; and, secondly, that she persisted in retaining with her the guardian angel, her sister Eliza, whom Shelley regarded with abhorrence. "I always thought," he says, "that if Harriet had suckled her own child, and if her sister had not lived with them, their union would have lasted much longer."

Yet, however strained was the situation, Shelley, from a sense of duty, resigned himself, though not without a hard struggle, to bear a burden which had become the more intolerable from comparison with the ideal happiness he enjoyed at Bracknell. He was so far from thinking of separation from Harriet, that four days after writing the letter to Hogg that we have given above, he renewed the ceremony of marriage with her according to the Anglican rite at the parish church of St. George. Harriet

was again pregnant, and Shelley, for the sake of a possible son and heir, was anxious to ratify the Edinburgh marriage.

In April the poet was once more at Bracknell. "Shelley," wrote Mrs. Boinville to Hogg (April 18th), "is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton."

But the greater Shelley's delight in the society at Bracknell, the more painful was the return to his silent and desolate hearth; and in this melancholy frame of mind he wrote, on leaving the Boinvilles, the following mournful stanzas:

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drunk the last pale beam of even;
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of
heaven.

Pause not; the time is past! Every voice cries, "Away!"
Tempt not with one last glance thy friend's ungentle mood;
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy
stay;

Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

He carried with him the ineffaceable remembrance of that house, and heath, and garden of Bracknell; and, above all, the recollection of the enchantresses who dwelt there, "of the music of two voices and the light of one sweet smile."*

Yet amid all this despair, there was as yet room for hope; if love were dead in Harriet's heart the poet could still appeal to her pity, and implore her not to condemn him to lose all hope. In May, 1814, he addressed to her the following lines, which have been found, in Harriet's own

* Stanzas, April, 1814.

handwriting, among a manuscript collection of poems prepared by Shelley for publication:

TO HARRIET.

Thy look of love has power to calm
 The stormiest passion of my soul ;
 Thy gentle words are drops of balm
 In life's too bitter bowl ;
 No grief is mine but that alone
 These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriet ! if all who long to live
 In the mild sunshine of thine eye,
 That price beyond all pain must give
 Beneath thy scorn to die——
 Then hear thy chosen own too late
 His heart most worthy of thy hate.

Be thou, then, one among mankind
 Whose heart is harder not for state,
 Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,
 Amid a world of hate ;
 And by a slight endurance seal
 A fellow being's lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek ;
 His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim ;
 Thy name is struggling ere he speak ;
 Weak is each trembling limb.
 In mercy let him not endure
 The misery of a fatal cure.

O trust for once no erring guide !
 Bid the remorseless feeling flee ;
 'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,
 'Tis anything but thee ;
 O deign a nobler pride to prove,
 And pity if thou canst not love.

It is probable this despairing appeal to Harriet's pity awakened no response in her heart ; and we may believe, while allowing for the natural exaggeration of his wounded love, that Shelley regarded such hardness as an unpardonable offence.*

* Mr. Dowden gives a curious proof of this in the variation of two lines in the sixth stanza of the dedication

In presence of such insensibility as this the occasion seemed to have arisen for him to apply to his own case the principles he had stated in a note to "Queen Mab," that marriage could not indissolubly unite two beings who were not made for each other, and that it became their duty to seek love and happiness in another union. This was the *fatal cure* of which he speaks in the stanzas to Harriet.

Since his re-marriage at St. George's he had become more intimate with Godwin, whose embarrassed pecuniary affairs had moved his generous heart,* and he had met, and been strangely impressed by the young daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, a beautiful girl of seventeen, whose pure, pale face shone with intelligence, sensibility, and earnestness, and in whom was mingled her father's clearness of intellect and firm quietude, with her mother's ardour of imagination and feeling. Shelley was dazzled.

If we may trust Peacock, who was Shelley's chief friend at the time, his passion for Mary was like a thunderbolt :

"Nothing that I ever read in tale or history," writes he, "could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible passion, than that under which I found him labouring, when at his invitation I came back to London from the country. His new passion was to be read in his looks, his red and inflamed eyes, his disordered hair

of "Laon and Cythna." These lines which now stand in the printed text,

Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts and cold like weights of icy stone !

were originally written with allusion to his cousin, Harriet Grove, and to his wife Harriet :

One whom I found was dear but false to me,
The other's heart was like a heart of stone.

* A sum of £3000 was required, which Shelley found it very difficult to raise.

and clothes. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said : 'I never part from this;' then he added . 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles :

Man's happiest lot is not to be, etc., etc."

Hogg knew nothing of this until June 8th.

"We were walking through Newgate Street," he says ; "when we reached Skinner Street, Shelley said : 'I must speak with Godwin ; come in, I will not detain you long.' I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and upstairs. We entered a room on the first floor. . . . Godwin was not there. Shelley appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of 'Political Justice.'

"'Where is Godwin?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. . . . He continued his uneasy promenade ; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of venerable volumes, when the door was softly and partially opened, a thrilling voice called, 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary!' and he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair, and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two, and then returned. 'Godwin is out, there is no use in waiting.' So we continued our walk along Holborn. 'Who was that, pray?' I asked ; 'a daughter!' 'Yes.' 'A daughter of William Godwin?' 'The daughter of Godwin, and Mary.' This was the first time that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. . . . Her quietness struck me, and also her paleness and piercing look."

The impression produced on Mary by Shelley was not less profound. His reverence and filial devotion for Godwin, the enthusiastic admiration he expressed for her mother, and more than all, perhaps, his deep sadness revealing some profound sorrow of heart, touched her tender and generous soul ; unasked she gave him that pity, so near akin to love, that had been refused him by Harriet, and on one occasion her emotion overcame her as she gazed on him, and tears rose to her eyes. Shelley laid aside the constraint he had

put upon himself, and responded by a little poem which throws more light on the dawn of their affection, and on their delicate and difficult position, than all the narratives of their biographers.

Meanwhile Shelley still corresponded with Harriet, who had removed to Bath. Some few days had elapsed at the beginning of July, and no letter reaching her from Shelley, she wrote in painful anxiety to the bookseller Hookham, entreating for news of her absent husband, failing which, she would herself come to London. Shelley replied to this that he expected her, and she arrived in town on July 14th.

In the interim, a terrible revelation had dealt a final blow to Shelley's sorely stricken heart; he had convinced himself not only that Harriet had ceased to love him, but that she had given her heart and herself to another.* Holding this conviction, no further hesitation was possible; Harriet might no longer be his wife.

On her arrival in London, Harriet found Shelley fully resolved upon an irrevocable separation.

She felt that resistance would be unavailing, and acquiesced in the proposed arrangements, returning with her child to her father's house, and perhaps hoping that time would restore to her him whom she had not retained on the day when he had pathetically entreated her to reciprocate his love.

As there was in Shelley's heart neither anger, nor animosity, nor desire of revenge, he continued to correspond with Harriet, to provide for her wants, and to occupy himself about her with friendly solicitude, until a time came when she was altogether undeserving of his care. He had done his duty, according to his conscience and

* An Irish gentleman, named Ryan, who in 1813 had been intimate with Shelley and Harriet.

his creed, and at a subsequent period could write to Southey, who had entreated him to examine his past life, as follows :

I take God to witness, if such a being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence, that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended.

The new object of his soul's affection, the ideal incarnation of Godwin's genius and Mary Wollstonecraft's noble heart, was clothed in Shelley's eyes with every quality and every perfection of the valiant and ideal woman that Harriet had lacked.

Mr. Jeaffreson exhausts his ingenuity in trying to prove that Mary Godwin was a kind of *ingénue*, who had been brought up in the usual wholesome beliefs concerning marriage and love, and that Shelley was the first to open her eyes and initiate her into her mother's doctrines. This is wilfully to misread Mary's character and disposition. "She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active in mind," so Godwin wrote of Mary at the age of fifteen; "her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible."

With such a temperament as this, and living as she did in an atmosphere of free-thought, Mary had not needed lessons from Shelley to initiate her into the religion of reason; she had amply profited by the teachings of Mr. Baxter,* with whom she had passed much of her girlhood. Shelley was surprised to meet with such elevation of thought, and such high philosophy, united with such extreme youth, and became her disciple. "I believe," he wrote to her in October, 1814,

* "Mr. Baxter," says Dowden, "had fed upon Godwin's doctrines, and on the appearance of 'Queen Mab' expressed his highest admiration for that work."

"I must become in Mary's hands what Harriet was in mine. Yet how differently disposed, how devoted and affectionate, how beyond measure reverencing and adoring the intelligence that governs me!" It was on terms of equality that Mary, as she herself said at a later period, placed her hand in his hand, and linked her fate with his.

In "*Laon and Cythna*," Laon bows before the genius of Cythna, and on Cythna the poet confers the part of teacher, of seer, and of prophet.

The tender remembrance of Mary Wollstonecraft hovered over the delicious idyll of these sister-souls, who joined their ardent ideal aspirations in platonic affection, until their lives might be united in love. Their usual meeting-place was the old churchyard of St. Pancras, where was the grave of Mary Wollstonecraft. To the shade of its overhanging willow Mary would escape with her books from the troubles of home and the ill-temper of her stepmother. It was there, probably, that she read "*Queen Mab*" in the copy given her by Shelley, in which he had written "*Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, P.B.S. You see, Mary, I have not forgotten you.*" At the end of the volume Mary had written in July, 1814:

This book is sacred to me, and as no other creature shall ever look into it, I may write in it what I please. Yet what shall I write—that I love the author beyond all powers of expression and that I am parted from him, dearest and only love? By that love we have promised to each other, although I may not be yours I can never be another's. But I am thine, exclusively thine.

Then followed these verses:

By the kiss of love, the glance none saw beside
 The smile none else might understand,
 The whispered thought of hearts allied,
 The pressure of thy thrilling hand.*

* From Byron's "*To Thyrza*," the first line being altered.

I have pledged myself to thee, and sacred is the gift. I remember your words : " You are now, Mary, going to mix with many, and for a moment I shall depart, but in the solitude of your chamber I shall be with you." Yes, you are ever with me, sacred vision—

But ah ! I feel in this was given
A blessing never meant for me ;
Thou art too like a dream from heaven
For earthly love to merit thee.*

A short separation had been imposed on Shelley by Godwin. The latter was certainly no very austere *Géronte* ; but he had been informed of the secret meetings of the young people, with whom he had seriously remonstrated. In order to lull the watchfulness of the philosopher, Shelley for a while ceased to see Mary. But the vows they had interchanged, and the ardour of their love, could endure no long separation ; they loved each other, and who should prevent the union of their lives ? Without the knowledge of Godwin and his wife, the lovers made their secret arrangements, and the astonishment of the author of " *Political Justice* " was great when on the morning of June 28th, he was informed that Mary's and Jane Clairmont's rooms were empty. The lovers were flying to the Continent.

* From Byron's lines beginning, " If sometimes in the haunts of men."

CHAPTER XI.

“HISTORY OF A SIX WEEKS’ TOUR”—JOURNAL
OF SHELLEY AND MARY—1814.

AT four o'clock on the morning of July 28th, the fugitives, accompanied by Jane Clairmont, who was to act as interpreter, left Skinner Street for Dover. But Shelley shall tell the story himself : *

[*July 28.*—The night preceding this morning, all being decided, I ordered a chaise to be ready by four o'clock. I watched until the lightning and the stars became pale. At length it was four. I believed it not possible that we should succeed ; still there appeared to lurk some danger even in certainty. I went ; I saw her ; she came to me. Yet one quarter of an hour remained. Still some arrangement must be made ; and she left me for a short time. How dreadful did this time appear ! It seemed that we trifled with life and hope. A few minutes passed. She was in my arms—we were safe. We were on our road to Dover.

* We owe to Mr. Dowden the very interesting extracts from Shelley's Journal, from which the account published by Mary in 1817 was compiled, under the following title : “History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland ; with Letters descriptive of a Sail round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni.” We have completed Shelley's Journal by the printed narrative, all passages from the former being enclosed in brackets [], thus.

Mary was ill as we travelled ; yet in that illness what pleasure and security did we not share ! The heat made her faint ; it was necessary at every stage that we should repose. I was divided between anxiety for her health and terror lest our pursuers should arrive. I reproached myself with not allowing her sufficient time to rest, with conceiving any evil so great that the slightest portion of her comfort might be sacrificed to avoid it.

At Dartford we took four horses, that we might outstrip pursuit. We arrived at Dover before four o'clock (where Mary was refreshed by a sea-bath). Some time was necessarily expended in consideration, in dinner, in bargaining with sailors and Custom-house officers. At length we engaged a small boat to convey us to Calais ; it was ready by six o'clock. The evening was most beautiful ; the sands slowly receded ; we felt safe. There was little wind, the sails flapped in the flagging breeze.

The moon rose, the night came on, and with the night a slow heavy swell, and a fresher breeze which soon became so violent as to toss the boat very much. Mary was much affected by the sea ; she could scarcely move. She lay in my arms through the night ; the little strength which remained in my own exhausted frame was all expended in keeping her head at rest on my bosom. The wind was violent and contrary. If we could not reach Calais, the sailors proposed making for Boulogne. They promised only two hours' sail from the shore ; yet hour after hour passed, and we were still far distant, when the moon sank in the red and stormy horizon, and the fast-flashing lightning became pale in the breaking day. We were proceeding slowly against the wind, when suddenly a thunder-squall struck the sail, and the waves rushed into the boat. Even the sailors believed that our situation was perilous. The wind had now changed, and we drove before a wind that came in violent gusts, directly to Calais.

Mary did not know our danger ; she was resting between my knees, that were unable to support her. She did not speak or look, but I felt that she was there. I had time in that moment to reflect and even to reason upon death ; it was rather a thing of discomfort and of disappointment than horror to me. We should never be separated, but in death we might not know and feel our union as now. I hope, but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die.

The morning broke, the lightning died away, the violence of the wind abated. We arrived at Calais whilst Mary still slept ; we drove upon the sands. Suddenly the broad sun rose over France.

Friday, July 29.—I said: "Mary, look; the sun rises over France." We walked over the sands to the inn; we were shown into an apartment that answered the purpose both of a sitting and sleeping-room.]

I heard for the first time the confused buzz of voices speaking a different language from that to which I had been accustomed, and saw a costume very unlike that worn on the opposite side of the Channel; the women with high caps and short jackets; the men with ear-rings; ladies walking about with high bonnets or *coiffures* lodged on the top of the head, the hair dragged up underneath, without any stray curls to decorate the temples or cheeks. There is, however, something very pleasing in the manners and appearance of the people of Calais that prepossesses you in their favour. A national reflection might occur that when Edward III. took Calais, he turned out the old inhabitants, and peopled it almost entirely with our own countrymen; but unfortunately the manners are not English.

We remained that day and the greater part of the next at Calais; we had been obliged to leave our boxes the night before at the English Custom-house, and it was arranged that they should go by the packet of the following day, which, detained by the contrary wind, did not arrive until night.

[In the evening Captain Davison came and told us that a fat lady had arrived, who had said that I had run away with her daughter; it was Mrs. Godwin. Jane spent the night with her mother.

Saturday, July 30.—Jane informs us that she is unable to withstand the pathos of Mrs. Godwin's appeal. She appealed to the municipality of Paris—to past slavery and to future freedom. I counselled her to take at least an hour for consideration. She returned to Mrs. Godwin and informed her that she resolved to continue with us.

I met Mrs. Godwin in the street apparently proceeding to embark for Dover. I walked alone with Mary to the field beyond the gate (a field among the fortifications—hay-makers at work in it). At six in the evening we left Calais and arrived at Boulogne at ten.]

We left Calais in a cabriolet drawn by three horses. To persons who had never before seen anything but a spruce English chaise and post-boy, there was something irresistibly ludicrous in our equipage. Our cabriolet was shaped something like a post-chaise, except that it had only two wheels, and consequently there were no doors at the sides; the front was let down to admit passengers. The horses were there placed abreast, the tallest in the middle, who was rendered more formidable by the addition of an unintelligible article

of harness, resembling a pair of wooden wings fastened to his shoulders; the harness was of rope; and the postillion, a queer, upright little fellow, with a long-pigtail, *craquéed* his whip, and clattered on; while an old forlorn shepherd with a cocked hat gazed on us as we passed.

The roads are excellent, but the heat was intense, and Mary suffered greatly from it. We slept at Boulogne the first night, where there was an ugly, but remarkably good-tempered *femme de chambre*. This made us for the first time remark the difference which exists between this class of persons in France and in England. In the latter country they are prudish, and if they become in the least degree familiar they are impudent. The lower orders in France have the easiness and politeness of the most well-bred English; they treat you unaffectedly as their equal, and consequently there is no scope for insolence.

We had ordered horses to be ready during the night, but were too fatigued to make use of them. The man insisted on being paid for the whole post. "Ah, madame," said the *femme de chambre*, "*pensez-y; c'est pour dédommager les pauvres chevaux d'avoir perdu leur doux sommeil.*" A joke from an English chambermaid would have been quite another thing.

In order to hasten the journey as much as possible, on account of Mary's health, we did not rest the following night, and the next day about two, arrived in Paris.

[*Tuesday, August 2.*—We engaged lodgings at the Hôtel de Vienne. Mary looked over, with me, the papers contained in her box. They consisted of her own writings, letters from her father and her friends, and my letters. She promised me that I should be permitted to read and study these productions of her mind that preceded our intercourse. I shall claim this promise at Uri. In the evening we walked to the gardens of the Tuilleries; they are very formal and uninteresting, without any grass. Mary was not well; we returned, and were too happy to sleep.*

* The "History of a Six Weeks' Tour" adds the following details about Paris: "In this city there are no hotels where you can reside as long or as short a time as you please, and we were obliged to engage apartments at an hotel for a week. They were dear and not very pleasant. As usual in France, the principal apartment was a bedchamber; there was another closet with a bed, and an ante-chamber which we used as a sitting-room. . . . I think the Boulevards infinitely pleasanter than the Tuilleries. This street nearly surrounds Paris, and is eight miles in extent; it is very wide,

Wednesday, August 3.—Received a cold and stupid letter from Hookham. He said that Mrs. Boinville's family were reduced to the utmost misery by the distant chance of their being called upon in the course of a year to pay forty pounds for me. He did not send the money. Wrote to Tavernier. Mary read to me some passages from Lord Byron's poems. I was not before so clearly aware how much colouring our own feelings throw upon the liveliest delineations of other minds. Our own perceptions are the world to us.

Thursday, August 4.—Mary told me that this was my birthday; I thought it had been the 27th June. Tavernier breakfasted; he is an idiot. I sold my watch, chain, etc., which brought eight napoleons five francs.* Tavernier dined; the fool infinitely more insupportable. He walked with us in the evening to the Boulevard; he walked with Jane.

Friday, August 5.—Breakfasted with some friends of Tavernier. I committed the mistake of imagining a married woman to be a little baby of nine years old, and if her child (whom I imagined to be her sister) had not possessed a more prepossessing countenance, I should have taken her in my lap and offered her a lump of sugar. The ladies talked of dress and eating. We went with Tavernier to the police and the church of Notre Dame, the interior of which much disappointed our expectations. At the Louvre we saw one picture apparently of the Deluge, which was terribly impressive. It was the only remarkable picture which we had time to observe. There was Heaven and Hell also; the Blessed looked too stupid. In the evening we sallied forth in search of H. M. (Helen Marie) Williams. After numerous unavailing inquiries, we met at the Place Vendôme a Frenchman who could speak English. He offered us his services in the necessary inquiries. He took us out of our way

and planted on either side with trees. At one end is a superb cascade which refreshes the senses by its continual splashing; near this stands the gate of St. Denis, a beautiful piece of sculpture. I do not know how it may at present be disfigured by the Gothic barbarism of the conquerors of France, who were not contented with retaking the spoils of Napoleon, but with impotent malice destroyed the monuments of their own defeat. When I saw this gate it was in its splendour, and made you imagine that the days of Roman greatness were transported to Paris."

* It has been stated that Shelley sent this money to Harriet.

for the pleasure of hearing himself talk ; he told us that he had assisted in bribing the mob to overthrow the statue of Napoleon ; that he was a Royalist, and had been in the English army during the reign of Bonaparte ; he was the first Royalist who had entered Paris. He made us sit down in the garden of the Tuilleries, and there with a smile of abundant and overflowing vanity, confessed that he was an author and a poet. We invited him to breakfast, hoping to derive from his officiousness a relief from our embarrassments.

Saturday, August 6.—M. R. de Savi (the “author and poet”) breakfasted with us ; we go with him to M. Peregaux the banker, who refuses to advance money. I learn from Tavernier the direction of H. M. Williams. Secure that my statement of our history and situation cannot fail to interest, I hasten hither. She is absent in the country ; the time of her return is uncertain. On my return to the hotel we go to Tavernier’s office to seek for letters ; we hear that Tavernier has letters for us, and is gone to our hotel. We return. We had appointed to dine with M. R. de Savi at six ; we keep the appointment at eight, leaving Jane to wait for Tavernier. M. R. de Savi had relinquished all hope. We return. Tavernier brings a dull and insolent letter from Hookham.

Sunday, August 7.—Tavernier breakfasts. Promises money. The morning passes in delightful converse. We almost forget that we are prisoners in Paris ; Mary especially seems insensible to all future evil. She feels as if our love would alone suffice to resist the invasions of calamity. She rested on my bosom and seemed even indifferent to take sufficient food for the sustenance of life. We went to Tavernier and received a remittance of sixty pounds. We talk over our plans and determine to walk to Uri. We went to sleep early on the sofa.]

In England we could not have put our plan in execution without sustaining continual insult and impertinence ; the French are far more tolerant of the vagaries of their neighbours. We resolved to walk through France, and with this design we determined to purchase an ass, to carry our portmanteau and one of us by turns.

Early therefore on Monday, August 8th, Shelley and Claire went to the ass market and purchased an ass, and the rest of the day until four in the afternoon, was spent in preparations for our departure ; during which, Madame, l’hôtesse paid us a visit, and attempted to dissuade us from our design. She represented to us that a large army had been recently disbanded, that the soldiers and officers wandered idle about the country, and that *les dames seraient certainement enlevées*. But we were proof against her argu-

ments, and packing up a few necessities, leaving the rest to go by the diligence, we departed in a *fiacre* from the door of the hotel, our little ass following.

We dismissed the coach at the barrier. It was dusk, and the ass seemed totally unable to bear one of us, appearing to sink under the portmanteau, although it was small and light. We were, however, merry enough, and thought the leagues short. We arrived at Charenton about ten.

Charenton is prettily situated in a valley, through which the Seine flows, winding among banks variegated with trees. On looking at this scene Claire exclaimed, "Oh! this is beautiful enough; let us live here." This was her exclamation on every new scene, and as each surpassed the one before, she cried, "I am glad we did not stay at Charenton, but let us live here."

Finding our ass useless, we sold it before we proceeded on our journey, and bought a mule for ten napoleons. About nine o'clock we departed. We were clad in black silk. I rode on the mule, which carried also our portmanteau; Shelley and Claire followed, bringing a small basket of provisions. About one o'clock we arrived at Gros-Bois, where under the shade of trees we ate our bread and fruit, and drank our wine, thinking of Don Quixote and Sancho.

This night we slept at Guignes, in the same room and beds in which Napoleon and some of his generals had rested during the late war. The little old woman of the place was highly gratified in having this story to tell, and spoke in warm praise of the Empress Josephine and Marie Louise, who had at different times passed on that road.

After having admired the picturesque situation of Provins, which "formed a scene for painting," our travellers reached that part of the country that had been most devastated during the war, and where smoking ruins still marked the passage of the Cossack. Throughout their journey from Nogent to Troyes, there were but ruined villages, houses burned down, blackened beams, broken walls, devastated gardens, deplorable ruins, and inhabitants still more wretched and deplorable. They can procure no milk, the cows had been taken by the Cossacks; they think themselves fortunate when they find shelter in a poor inn where they are offered

rancid bacon, sour bread, and impossible beds. At Echemine the inhabitants, as if belonging to another world, are ignorant that Napoleon has been deposed, and when Shelley asked why they did not rebuild their cottages, replied, they were afraid of the Cossacks. On approaching Troyes, a little green vineyard seems to them like an oasis in the Libyan desert.

On August 13th they reached that "dirty and uninviting town," and there, owing to Shelley having sprained an ankle, and walking being impossible, the mule was sold and an open carriage bought for five napoleons; a driver also was engaged, who undertook for the sum of eight napoleons to convey the travellers to Neufchâtel in six days. The simple vanity of their muleteer amused our travellers. He pointed out a plain as the scene of a battle between the Russians and the French—"where the Russians gained the victory?" interrupted Mary. "Oh, no, madame," he replied, "the French are never beaten." "But how was it, then, that the Russians entered Troyes?" "Oh, after being beaten, they took a circuitous route, and thus entered the town."

Shelley made use of his short sojourn at Troyes to write a long letter to Harriet, in which he proposed she should join their travelling party, and requested her to address her reply to the Post Office, Neufchâtel. He ends his description of the terrible state of France with the following singular remark: ". . . dreadful as these calamities are, I can scarcely pity the inhabitants; they are the most unamiable, inhospitable, and unaccommodating of the human race."

At Besançon, their proximity to the mountains delighted them; but the roads became difficult, and the driver refused to proceed. They were obliged to pass the night in the miserable inn

of a miserable village called Mort; after a delightful evening spent in climbing rocks, and reading a tale by Mary Wollstonecraft, also Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, they determined on sleeping by the kitchen fire, as an alternative to sharing a bedroom with the driver; "Shelley much disturbed by the creaking door, the screams of a poor smothered child, and the girl who washed the glasses."

The driver, still scared at the mountains, halted at the little village of Noé. Our travellers took advantage of the delay to wander in a wood, where they entered into serious converse on the perfectibility and future destiny of the world.*

* Claire records this conversation in her journal: "Shelley said there would come a time when nowhere on the earth would there be a dirty cottage to be found. Mary asked what time would elapse before that time would come; he said, 'Perhaps a thousand years.' We said, 'Perhaps it would never come, as it was so difficult to persuade the poor to be clean.' But he said it must infallibly arrive, for Society was progressive, and was evidently moving forwards towards perfectibility; and then he described the career made by man. I wish I could remember the whole, but half has slipped out of my memory—only I recollect that men were first savages; then nomadic tribes wandering from place to place with their flocks; then they formed into villages; then into towns; and then improvement in mind, morals, comfort, etc., set in; and then next came the Arts, and then the Sciences; and from this point Society would go on step by step to almost perfection. In the meanwhile the *voiturier*, grown tired of waiting, had gone on alone. We found him again at Pontarlier. He was very impertinent; asked why we had stayed so long in the woods, there was nothing to see in the woods; said he had waited two hours at Noé expecting us to return, and then had driven on; it was all our faults, he said; and after thinking awhile, Shelley remarked that the driver was right, and it was his dissertation upon the perfectibility of Man that had put us into such difficulties. Mary laughed and said: 'Men always were the source of a thousand difficulties.' Then Shelley asked her why she of a sudden looked so sad, and she answered: 'I was

This was their farewell to France. As they approached Switzerland, after leaving Saint Sulpice, the picturesque beauties of the Alpine scenery made them forget all their previous misadventures. On the 19th August, when two leagues from Neufchâtel, they had their first view of the Alps. "How great is my rapture!" cried Shelley. "I a fiery man, with my heart full of youth, and with my beloved by my side, I behold those lordly, immeasurable Alps. They look like a second world gleaming on one; they look like dreams more than realities, they are so heavenly pure and white."

The sum of sixty pounds they had brought from Paris was expended. No letters for them at Neufchâtel. Fortunately, a banker is found who consents to advance Shelley the sum of thirty-eight pounds, sufficient to take them to Uri, the intended close of their journey, and to establish them quietly in some lonely cottage. Two days' driving brought them to Lucerne, and its long imagined delights. Brünner, with the sight of William Tell's Chapel, fascinated them; "this lovely lake, these sublime mountains and wild forests seemed a fit cradle for a mind aspiring to high adventure and heroic deeds." They could not weary of contemplating "the divine objects that surrounded" them.

The romance-writer and poet, full of dreams of a golden age and terrestrial paradise, was then meditating his romance of "The Assassins,"*

thinking of my father, and wondering what he was now feeling.' He then said: 'Do you mean that as a reproach to me?' and she answered: 'Oh, no! don't let us think more about it.'"

* This was a Christian tribe, who at the very beginning of Christianity had withdrawn into the valleys of the Lebanon, and became the origin of the famous Assassins, who fought against the Crusaders under the Old Man of the Mountain.

of which, unfortunately, only a short fragment remains. The story opens with the siege of Jerusalem. He purposed that Uri should be for him the solitary vale of Bethzatanai, where those other exiles from the holy city had sought peace, love, and God, far from the civilised world, "learning to identify this mysterious friend and benefactor with the delight that is bred among the solitary rocks, and has its dwelling alike in the changing colours of the clouds, and the inmost recesses of the caverns."

But, in the season of its utmost prosperity and magnificence, Art might not aspire to vie with Nature in the valley of Bethzatanai. All that was wonderful and lovely was collected in this deep seclusion. The fluctuating elements seemed to have been rendered everlastingly permanent in forms of wonder and delight. The mountains of Lebanon had been divided to their base to form this happy valley ; on every side their icy summits darted their white pinnacles into the clear blue sky, imaging, in their grotesque outline, minarets, and ruined domes, and columns worn with time. Far below, the silver clouds rolled their bright volumes in many beautiful shapes, and fed the eternal springs that, quitting the dark chasms like a thousand radiant rainbows, leaped into the quiet vale then, lingering in many a dark glade among the groves of cypress and of palm, lost themselves in the lake. The immensity of these precipitous mountains, with their starry pyramids of snow, excluded the sun, which overtopped not, even in its meridian, their overhanging rocks. But a more heavenly and serener light was reflected from their icy mirrors, which, piercing through the many-tinted clouds, produced lights and colours of inexhaustible variety. The herbage was perpetually verdant, and clothed the darkest recesses of the caverns and the woods. Nature, undisturbed, had become an enchantress in these solitudes ; she had collected here all that was wonderful and divine from the armoury of her omnipotence. The very winds breathed health and renovation, and the joyousness of youthful courage. Fountains of crystalline water played perpetually among the aromatic flowers, and mingled a freshness with their odour. The pine-boughs became instruments of exquisite contrivance, among which every varying breeze waked music of new and more delightful melody. Meteoric shapes, more effulgent than the moonlight, hung on the

wandering clouds, and mixed in discordant dance around the spiral fountains. Blue vapours assumed strange lineaments under the rocks and among the ruins, lingering like ghosts with slow and solemn step. Through a dark chasm to the east, in the long perspective of a portal glittering with the unnumbered riches of a subterranean world, shone the broad moon, pouring, in one yellow and unbroken stream, her horizontal beams. Nearer the icy region, autumn and spring held an alternate reign. The sere leaves fell and choked the sluggish brooks, the chilling fogs hung diamonds on every spray, and in the dark, cold evening the howling winds made melancholy music in the trees. Far above shone the bright throne of winter, clear, cold, and dazzling. Sometimes there were seen the snowflakes to fall before the sinking orb of the beamless sun, like a shower of fiery sulphur. The cataracts, arrested in their course, seemed, with their transparent columns, to support the dark-browed rocks. Sometimes the icy whirlwind scooped the powdery snow aloft, to mingle with the hissing meteors, and scatter spangles through the rare and rayless atmosphere.

To the Arabians, constant spectators of so sublime a scene:

Thus securely excluded from an abhorred world, all thought of its judgment was cancelled by the rapidity of their fervid imaginations. They ceased to acknowledge, or deigned not to advert to, the distinctions with which the majority of base and vulgar minds control the longings and struggles of the soul towards its place of rest. A new and sacred fire was kindled in their hearts and sparkled in their eyes. Every gesture, every feature, the minutest action, was modelled to beneficence and beauty, by the holy inspiration that had descended on their searching spirits. The epidemic transport communicated itself through every heart, with the rapidity of a blast from heaven. They were already disembodied spirits; they were already the inhabitants of paradise. To live, to breathe, to move, was itself a sensation of immeasurable transport. Every new contemplation of the condition of his nature brought to the happy enthusiast an added measure of delight, and impelled to every organ where mind is united to external things, a keener and more exquisite perception of all that they contain of lovely and divine. To love, to be beloved, suddenly became an insatiable famine of his nature, which the wide circle of the universe, comprehending beings of such inexhaustible variety and stupendous magnitude of excellence, appeared too narrow and confined to satiate.

Alas that these visitings of the spirit of life should fluctuate and pass away! That the moments when the human mind is commensurate with all that it can conceive of excellent and powerful, should not endure with its existence, and survive its most momentous change! But the beauty of a vernal sunset, with its overhanging curtains of empurpled cloud, is rapidly dissolved, to return at some unexpected period, and spread an alleviating melancholy over the dark vigils of despair.

Uri, however, was the dream of one day only. The six months' intended residence in the hideous Brünnen house called the Château, dwindled to one of forty-eight hours. Only twenty-eight pounds remained in the travellers' purse, and they must at once return to London. On August 28th they reached Lucerne, where Shelley read *King Lear* aloud,* and worked at his novel of "The Assassins." From motives of economy, they decided on travelling by water, taking the *diligence par eau* from Reuss to Lauffenburg; the passengers, "uncleanly," disgusting smokers, and altogether so uncivil and rude, that Shelley was obliged to strike one of them.

The Reuss is exceedingly rapid, and we descended several falls, one of them more than eight feet. . . . There is something very delicious in the sensation, when at one moment you are at the top of a fall of water, and before the second has expired you are at the bottom, still rushing on with the impulse which the descent has given.

We shall frequently meet with a recollection of this sensation in the recital of the fantastic voyages made by the heroes of Shelley's poems.

From Basle to Mayence our travellers descended the Rhine on a boat laden with goods.

Tuesday, August 30.—The Rhine is violently rapid to-day, and although interrupted by no rocks is swollen with

* Claire, who was highly impressionable, was struck with so much horror at *King Lear* that Shelley was obliged to discontinue reading it aloud.

high waves ; it is full of little islands, green and beautiful. Before we arrived at Shaufane the river became suddenly narrow, and the boat dashed with inconceivable rapidity round the base of a rocky hill covered with pines.

A ruined tower, with its desolated windows, stood on the summit of another hill that jutted into the river ; beyond, the sunset was illuminating the mountains and the clouds, and casting the reflection of its hues on the agitated river. . . . Here we had no fellow-passengers to disturb our tranquillity by their vulgarity and rudeness. . . . Shelley read aloud to us Mary Wollstonecraft's "Letters from Norway,"* and we passed our time delightfully.

The next morning a light skiff took the place of the boat, and, on leaving Strasbourg, our travellers once more took their places in the *diligence par eau* in company of University students and of one terrible† Republican who talked of nothing but cutting off kings' heads. At one of the most dangerous passes of the Rhine they came on a boat that had foundered the same morning, and whose entire crew had perished. Their own boatman, proud to show off his few words of French, consoled them by saying "que c'est seulement un bateau qui était subitement renversé, et tous les peuples sont seulement noyés."

From Mayence to Cologne—that part of the Rhine which is so marvellously described in the third canto of "Childe Harold"—they were again in company with the terrible Germans—smoking,

* Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, 1796.

† Jane, in her journal, speaks of two other passengers—one a man "that pretended to something," and the other a schoolmaster who spoke a little English, and who sang German songs that she much admired. "As we were just passing the dangerous defile" (of the Rhine), she says, "the man of pretensions turned to us, and said : 'Allons ! il faut prier le bon Dieu.' We laughed ; he answered, 'Eh bien ! donc il faut chanter.' The schoolmaster immediately began, and they sang an animated German song, which had a much finer effect when seconded by the breaking of the waves over the rocks."

shouting, and (worst of all to English eyes) kissing each other.

Before their delighted eyes pass visions of "hills covered with vines and trees, craggy cliffs crowned by desolate towers, and wooded islands where picturesque ruins peeped from behind the foliage and cast the shadows of their forms on the troubled waters which disturbed without deforming them." They left Bonn, that "loveliest paradise on earth," although unfortunately inhabited by such wretched specimens of the human race, and reached Cologne by road. From Cologne to Cleves they drove in a post-chaise behind the diligence, and accomplished three leagues in seven or eight hours; then continued their journey by posting across the monotonous plains of Holland, whose sole beauty—a delightful verdure—reminded them of the green fields of England. They embarked at Rotterdam, and then ensued a delay of two days at Marsluys through stress of weather, during which Shelley worked at his romance of "The Assassins," while Mary began a tale entitled "Hate," and Jane a kind of philosophical novel called "The Idiot." On September 10th they had travelled eight hundred miles for less than thirty pounds. But they had only one guinea left in their possession.

At last, under the guidance of an English captain, their vessel crossed the bar at the mouth of the Rhine, and on September 13th lay at Gravesend in sight of the Kentish hills.

This rapid journey, amid scenes so various, and seen as it were in a fantastic mirage, left an indelible impression on the mind of the poet. He recurs to it with beautifying and idealising touches in all his great compositions. The living memory of Nature's scenes, troubled and calm, serene and terrible by turns, evoked in Shelley marvellous visions which followed him ceaselessly,

and were depicted whenever the framework of his poetical creations permitted. In the preface to "*Laon and Cythna*" he declares, with little or no exaggeration:

I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains.

But, although he was struck by the grandiose aspect of Nature, he was equally impressed with the desolation and ruin wrought by man; with the fatal effects of war, and Invasion; and these he is to depict with terrible length in "*Laon and Cythna*."

I have seen the theatre of more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and gloomy houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds.

This six weeks' journey was not lost to posterity; to it was due in great measure "*Alastor*" and the "*Revolt of Islam*."

CHAPTER XII.

SHELLEY IN LONDON AND AT BISHOPSGATE—
“ALASTOR”—1814-1816.

ON his return to London, in the winter of 1814-15, Shelley found himself materially and morally in a critical position. Debts had accumulated, and his father was less than ever inclined to pay them. His creditors were clamorous, and each day brought fresh difficulties. Still more painful was the alienation of the greater number of his London friends, Maimouna included. Godwin's door was closed against him; yet the sage of Skinner Street did not refuse to be under pecuniary obligations to him whose conduct he considered unpardonable.*

* This strange attitude of Godwin ended by exasperating Shelley, and in his correspondence with the philosopher of Skinner Street he cannot conceal his bitterness. He writes under date March 6th, 1816: “My astonishment, and I will confess when I have been treated with most harshness and cruelty by you, my indignation has been extreme, that, knowing as you do my nature, any considerations should have prevailed on you to be thus harsh and cruel. I lamented also over my ruined hopes, of all that your genius once taught me to expect from your virtue, when I found that for yourself, your family, and your creditors, you would submit to that communication with me, which you once rejected and abhorred, and which no pity for my poverty or

Hogg and Peacock alone remained true to him. His relations with Harriet had been complicated by the birth of a second child named Charles Bysshe, and were only a source of trouble and annoyance.

Reading, writing, conversation, discussion with Hogg or Peacock, and Latin and Greek lessons to Mary, were pleasant diversions of his daily recurring vexations. After a long day of business and fatigue Shelley would return to the Margaret Street lodgings with some new volume of poetry, Wordsworth's "Excursion,"* or Byron's "Lara," and the evening was spent in reading aloud ancient and modern prose and poetry. Coleridge, Spenser, Milton, or Seneca were followed by Godwin and Lewis's tales, or the stories of a German disciple of Godwin, Charles Brockden Brown.† Four of these stories, according to Peacock, were works that, together with Schiller's "Brigands" and Goethe's "Faust," exercised a powerful influence on Shelley's mind and character. Some evenings were devoted to "Garnerin's Lectures on Electricity, the Gases, and the Phantasmagoria," or to the theatre. In 1814 Edmund Kean appeared for the first time on the boards of Drury Lane. On October 13th Shelley was present at his representation of *Hamlet*. His first impression of this great actor, to whom he subsequently thought of entrusting the character

sufferings, assumed willingly for you, could avail to extort. Do not talk of *forgiveness* again to me, for my blood boils in my veins, and my gall rises against all that bears the human form, when I think of what I, their benefactor and ardent lover, have endured of enmity and contempt from you and from all mankind."

* Mary's Journal: "Shelley brings home Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' of which we read a part; much disappointed. He is a slave."

† These four novels of Brown's are, "Wieland," "Ormond," "Edgar Huntley," and "Arthur Mervyn."

of Count Cenci, was unfavourable; at the end of the second act he left the theatre.*

To these intellectual pastimes were added other forms of recreation: visits to Exeter 'Change, to Covent Garden Market, to Lucien Bonaparte's collection of pictures,† to walks by the Serpentine or the Surrey Canal, and often to a pond near Primrose Hill, where Shelley delightedly sailed his paper boats.

There remained little leisure for composition, yet Shelley continued to work at his novel, and contributed to the December number of the *Critical Review* an article on Hogg's philosophical novel, "Memoirs of Prince Alexis Haimatoff." He bitterly regretted the literary impotence to which he was reduced by pecuniary embarrassments and their attendant cares:

"One day," writes Peacock, "as we were walking together on the banks of the Surrey Canal, and discoursing of Wordsworth and quoting some of his verses, Shelley suddenly said to me: "Do you think Wordsworth could have written such poetry if he ever had dealings with money-lenders?"

At one period (from October 23rd to November 9th) the danger from the money-lenders became so pressing, that Shelley, having been warned in time of his impending arrest, was forced to leave the St. Pancras lodgings and part for a while from his beloved one. Bailiffs, however, were on

* Mary's Journal: "The extreme depravity and disgusting nature of the stage, the inefficacy of acting to encourage or maintain the delusion. The loathsome sight of men personating characters which do not and cannot belong to them. Shelley displeased with what he saw of Kean."

† Mary mentions, among these pictures, in her journal, a "Magdalen," by Greuze, and Carlo Dolci's "Four Evangelists," and in Newman Street there was a statue of Theoclea, "a divinity," exclaims Mary, "that raises your mind to all virtue and excellence; I never beheld anything half so wonderfully beautiful."

his track, and he took refuge sometimes with his friend Peacock, at others in various hotels, where he contrived, with every imaginable precaution, to receive short visits from Mary, with whom he was in close correspondence in order to keep her informed of daily events, and to arrange places and times of meeting. These letters, which have been published for the first time by Mr. Dowden, while revealing Shelley's state of agitation and perplexity, depict still more vividly his ardent love in that time of bitter trial. We give a few extracts full of passionate adoration :

This separation is a calamity not to be endured patiently ; I cannot support your absence. I thought that it would be less painful to me. . . . But, my beloved, this will not last. . . . We shall soon be restored to each other. The wretchedness of our separation, I am convinced, will endow me with eloquence and energies adequate to the peril. . . . Light of my life, my very spirit of hope . . . when, when shall I meet you ? . . . Give my love to Jane. I think she has a sincere affection for you.

Εμον κριτεριον των αγαθων τοδε.

. . . I wander restlessly about. I cannot read or even write ; but this will soon pass. I should not inflict my own Mary with my dejection ; she has sufficient cause for disturbance to need consolation from me. Well, we shall meet to-day. I cannot write, but I love you with so unalterable a love that the contemplation of me will serve for a letter . . . My dearest, best Mary, let me see your sweet eyes full of happiness when we meet. All will be well. I hope to have deserved many kisses. . . . Know you, my best Mary, that I feel myself, in your absence, almost degraded to the level of the vulgar and impure. I feel their vacant stiff eyeballs fixed upon me, until I seem to have been infected with their loathsome meaning—to inhale a sickness that subdues me to languor. Oh ! those redeeming eyes of Mary, that they might beam upon me before I sleep ! Praise my forbearance, oh ! beloved one—that I do not rashly fly to you, and at least secure a moment's bliss. Wherefore should I delay ? Do you not long to meet me ? All that is exalted and buoyant in my nature urges me towards you, reproaches me

with cold delay, laughs at all fear, and spurns to dream of prudence. Why am I not with you?

Alas! we must not meet.

. . . How hard and stubborn must be the spirit that does not confess you to be the subtlest and most exquisitely fashioned intelligence; that among women there is no equal mind to yours! And I possess this treasure! How beyond all estimate is my felicity! Yes! I am encouraged; I care not what happens; I am most happy.

My beloved Mary, I know not whether these transient meetings produce not as much pain as pleasure. What have I said? I do not mean it. I will not forget the sweet moments when I saw your eyes—the divine rapture of the few and fleeting kisses.

. . . Mary, love, we must be reunited. . . . Your thoughts alone can waken mine to energy; my mind without yours is dead and cold, as the dark midnight river when the moon is down. It seems as if you alone could shield me from impurity and vice. If I was absent from you long, I should shudder with horror at myself; my understanding becomes undisciplined without you. . . . Evidently you surpass me in originality and simplicity of mind. How divinely sweet a task it is to imitate each other's excellences, and each moment to become wiser in this surpassing love, so that constituting but on being, all real knowledge may be comprised in the maxim *γνώθι σεαυτον* (Know thyself) with infinite more justice than in its narrow and common application.

How terrible if month after month I should pass without you, or only to see you by snatches and moments. . . . Love me, my dearest, best Mary, love me in confidence and security; do not think of me as one in danger, or even as one in sorrow. The remembrance and expectation of such sweet moments as we experienced last night, consoles, strengthens, and redeems me from despondency. There is eternity in those moments; they contain the true elixir of immortal life.

My own beloved Mary, do I not love you? Is not your image the only consolation to my lonely and benighted condition? Do I not love you with a most unextinguishable love; a feeling that well compensates for the altered looks of those who love none but themselves? What sentiment but disgust and indignation is excited by the desertion of those who fly because they think constancy imprudent!

The feeling is sweet, most ennobling, and producing a most celestial balm, with which the sick and weary spirit reposes upon one who may not be doubted; to whom the slightest taint of suspicion is death—irrevocable annihilation.

To-morrow, blest creature, I shall clasp you again—*for ever*. Shall it be so? This is the ancient language, that love alone can translate.

So my beloved boasts that she is more perfect in the practice than I in the theory of love. Is it thus? No, sweet Mary, you only meant that you loved me more than you could express; that reasoning was too cold and slow for the rapid fervour of your conceptions. Perhaps, in truth, Peacock had infected me; my disquisitions were cold—my subtleties unmeaningly refined; and I am a harp responsive to every wind—the scented gale of summer can wake it to a sweet melody, but rough cold blasts draw forth discordance and jarring sounds.

My own love, did I not appear happy to-day? For a few moments I was entranced in most delicious pleasure; yet I was absent and dejected. I knew not when we might meet again, when I might hold you in my arms and gaze on your dear eyes at will, and snatch momentary kisses in the midst of one happy hour, and sport in security with my entire and unbroken bliss. . . . There are moments in your absence, my love, when the bitterness with which I regret the unrecoverable time wasted in unprofitable solitude and worldly cares is a most painful weight; you alone reconcile me to myself and to my beloved hopes.*

* Mary's own letters are no less passionate and tender. The following extract will be read with interest :

"Tuesday, October 25th, 1814.

"For what a minute did I see you yesterday! Is this the way, my beloved, we are to live till the 6th? In the morning when I wake I turn to look for you. Dearest Shelley, you are solitary and uncomfortable. Why cannot I be with you to cheer you and to press you to my heart? Ah! my love, you have no friends; why then should you be torn from the only one who has affection for you? But I shall see you to-night, and this is the hope I shall live on through the day. Be happy, dear Shelley, and think of me. Why do I say this, dearest, and only one? I know how tenderly you love me, and how you repine at your absence from me. When shall we be free from fear of treachery? . . . I was so dreadfully tired yesterday that I was obliged to take a coach home. Forgive this extravagance, but I am so very weak at present. . . . A morning's rest, however, will set me quite right again; I shall be well when I meet you this evening. I send you 'Diogenes' [probably a translation of Wieland's 'Diogenes'], as you have no books."

On November 9th, all danger being over, through arrangements entered into by Shelley the lovers were once more united, and, leaving the St. Pancras lodgings, removed their household goods to Nelson Square.

The early months of the year 1815 showed a somewhat clearer horizon. Old Sir Bysshe died on January 6th, and, after long and tedious negotiations between Shelley and his father, an arrangement was made by which he agreed to cede certain inherited rights, and in return was to receive an annual income of £1000.* He at once appropriated a proportion of that sum to a provision for Harriet, allowing her an annuity of two hundred pounds, and in April he handed over one thousand pounds to Godwin.

Meanwhile, the excitement, privations, and anxiety of the closing months of 1814, had seriously affected his health; he believed himself to be attacked by pulmonary consumption, but happily the danger passed away. It is probable that in the state of melancholy induced by ill-health he composed the "Stanzas on Death," and conceived the first idea of "Alastor." Another poignant trouble also tried his weakened constitution. On February 22nd, a seven-months babe, a delicate little girl, was born to Mary; but notwithstanding the tenderest care, the infant died on March 6th. In order to give any idea of the parents' agonising grief, it would be needful to transcribe their journal, from which Mr. Dowden has quoted portions dating from February 22nd to March 20th. All Europe was ringing with

* Mary relates in her journal how Shelley, on hearing of his grandfather's death, went down to Field Place to attempt a reconciliation with his father. He was refused admittance, so sat himself down outside the door of his former home, and consoled himself with reading "Comus" from a pocket edition of Milton.

Napoleon's return to France, but scarcely an echo is found in their journal :

"March 1.—Bonaparte invades France." All their thoughts, their souls, are centred on a cradle that will soon be empty. Books, and an occasional visit from Hogg and Peacock, constitute their only diversion from that absorbing anxiety. After the babe's death, the journal contains but a funereal chant. "March 9.—Still think about my little dead baby." "March 19.—Dream that my little baby came to life again, that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. Not in good spirits. Shelley is very unwell." That Mary's feelings were shared by Shelley we cannot doubt, and we possess indisputable proof in that passage of "*Laon and Cythna*," wherein he describes so exquisitely the birth and death of the babe, and Mary's dream. Such emotions could not be so touchingly described unless they had been experienced.

However perfect the union of mind and heart between Shelley and Mary, a slight cloud nevertheless obscured their happiness, caused by the abiding presence of Jane Clairmont (*Claire*) in their home. Shelley's attentions to her, their frequent walks together when Mary was unable to accompany them, their reading "*Pastor Fido*" and "*Orlando Furioso*" together, soon awoke a very natural jealousy in Mary's sensitive heart. Yet it was difficult to get rid of a friend who had been so true under trial, who was so devoted to Shelley's interests, and who was so attractive by her talents, her qualities, and even her faults. Mrs. Godwin, who thought her an objectionable companion for Fanny, was unwilling to receive her in Skinner Street; Shelley's house seemed to be her only resource. But Mary felt too

keenly on the subject to bear long delay ; and after much discussion and hesitation, it was agreed that Claire should take up her abode with Mrs. Bicknall, who owned a charming cottage at Lynmouth. The departure of Shelley's friend is chronicled in Mary's journal with a satisfaction and joy she does not attempt to conceal :

Friday, May 12.—Shelley and his friend (Claire) have a last conversation.

May 13.—Claire goes ; Shelley walks with her. Charles Clairmont comes to breakfast—talk. Shelley goes out with him. . . . Jefferson (Hogg) does not come till five. Get very anxious about Shelley ; go out to meet him. . . . Shelley returns at half-past six ; *the business is finished.* After dinner Shelley is very tired. . . . *I begin a new journal with our regeneration.*

Shelley, while estimating Claire at her true worth, was nevertheless attached to her, and must have regretted the necessity of the sacrifice he had made for the sake of peace. The passing cloud between the two women, and their subsequent early reconciliation, form the ground-work of his domestic idyll, "Rosalind and Helen."

During their sad separation of the preceding year, Mary on one occasion wrote to Shelley :

Oh ! how I long to be at our dear home, where nothing can trouble us, neither friends nor enemies ! . . . Nantgwilt ! do you not wish to be settled there, in a house you know, love, with your own Mary, nothing to disturb you, studying, walking ?

Shelley, too, was anxious to fulfil Mary's wish. He was as impatiently desirous as herself to escape from London. Part of the summer was passed by him in a tour along the south coast of Devon in search of a retired and picturesque retreat. Meanwhile Mary was staying at Clifton and besought him not to prolong his absence.

"To-morrow," she writes, "is the 28th of July" (the anniversary of their flight to Dover). "Dearest, ought we not to be together on that day? Indeed we ought, my love, as I shall shed some tears to think we are not. Do not be angry, dear love; your Pecksie is a good girl, and is quite well now again, except a headache when she waits so anxiously for her love's letters. . . ."

"My dear, dear love, I most earnestly and with tearful eyes beg that I may come to you, if you do not like to leave the searches after a house."

At last, in the month of August, he found a suitable house at Bishopsgate, on the borders of Windsor Park, not far from the Thames, and in that house they immediately established their home, and there remained until late spring in 1816. The period of their sojourn at Bishopsgate is one of the most tranquil and happy in Shelley's life. At the end of August, in company with Mary, Peacock,* and Charles Clairmont,† Shelley boated up the river as far as Lechlade and Cricklade (Gloucestershire), and to that excursion we owe the lines on the churchyard in Lechlade, "A Summer Evening Churchyard," which, although still melancholy in sentiment, are sweeter and calmer, as was the poet's own spirit at that epoch. Death to him is no longer terrible; no longer is the stroke of death frightful to one whose brain is not encircled by nerves of steel; he hears the dead "sleeping in their sepulchres and moulder-

* Five years before, Peacock had sung the glories of the Thames in verse.

† Charles Clairmont gave a detailed account of this excursion in a letter to his sister Claire, to be found in Mr. Dowden's work. He thus describes their visit to Oxford: "We arrived (at Oxford) about seven in the evening, and stopped till four the next day. . . . We saw the Bodleian Library, the Clarendon Press, and walked through the quadrangles of the different colleges. We visited the very rooms where the two noted infidels, Shelley and Hogg, pored, with the incessant and the unwearied application of the alchemist, over the certified and natural boundaries of human knowledge."

ing as they sleep—a 'thrilling sound.'" "Thus solemnised and softened, death is mild, and terrorless as this serenest night," and "loveliest dreams" keep "perpetual watch" on its "breathless sleep." Already we hear the accents of "Alastor."

A few days after his return to Bishopsgate, Shelley wrote to Hogg:

I found your letter on my return from a water excursion on the Thames, the particulars of which will be recounted in another letter. The exercise and dissipation of mind attached to such an expedition have produced so favourable an effect upon my health, that my habitual dejection and irritability have almost deserted me, and I can devote six hours of the day to study without difficulty. I have been engaged lately in the commencement of several literary plans, which, if my present temper of mind endures, I shall probably complete in the winter. I have consequently deserted Cicero, or proceed but slowly with his philosophic dialogues. . . . I have been induced by one of the subjects I am now pursuing to consult Bayle. I think he betrays great obliquity of understanding and coarseness of feeling.

No events, as you know, disturb our tranquillity.

Of the various works planned by Shelley in the happy retirement of Bishopsgate only "Alastor" was completed. "Now at last," exclaim the critics, "we have the real, the immortal Shelley!" Mr. Rossetti, indeed, justly compares it with "Prometheus Unbound," and "The Cenci." It is certain that between "Alastor" and "Queen Mab" there is an abyss. It has been said of Châteaubriand, "What remains to us of him?"—"René." Did "Alastor" alone remain to us, it would be sufficient to rank its author among the very greatest poets who have sung and wept for us. Its dominant tone is not to be found in "Queen Mab"—a tone of dreamy and almost despairing sadness, which is the more poignant and penetrating for being mingled with the most brilliant and lifelike descriptions of Nature.

"Alastor" is the first idealised autobiography of Shelley; the outcome of a psychological moment in which the discouragement engendered by the disenchanting contact of a real and an ideal world takes complete hold of the soul, and includes the whole universe in its own melancholy. Alastor* is the embodiment of the "Spirit of Solitude," of that evil genius which separates a soul from its fellows; the demon from whom Shelley suffered so much from the moment when, declaring war against every superstition, prejudice, and hypocrisy, he saw the world turn its back upon him and reply to his words of blessing and salvation by its anathema and hate. Mingled with the bitterness of disillusion was his presentiment of approaching death; and with his heart still bleeding at the terrible separation exacted of him by his ideal, the poet journeys through the half-seen marvels of the world towards his grave—a supreme intellect whose loss is "too deep for tears," and who will leave a void in the senseless universe. Shelley would not have belonged to his epoch had he not experienced that moral unrest, born of the eighteenth century and of the Revolution, which had already been diversely expressed in "Werther," in "René," and in "Oberman." If there be any resemblance to these, it is assuredly to Senancour's hero. Alastor is not embittered like Werther; he is altogether unlike the "beau ténébreux" of Châteaubriand; nor has he the fatuity of "Childe Harold." He is the poet-Oberman.

In Senancour's "Rêveries" (1798) there is a similar yearning for the regeneration of mankind.

The misfortune of Shelley's hero, Shelley's own misfortune, and the misfortune, we will add,

* The word is taken from Æschylus.

of every poet worthy of the name, is the inability to find in any created being the realisation of their sublime ideal. "Alastor" has been rightly compared with the "Endymion" of Keats. Endymion also personifies a soul in search of its ideal, but unlike the hero of "Alastor" it succeeds in finding the object of its search.* The spirit of Alastor is quite opposite. Though Shelley may condemn the egoism of the solitary idealist, he nevertheless prefers the fate of the poet dying a victim to his quenchless thirst, but purified and redeemed by death, to the mournful destiny of those cold and impassive souls who, "deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind."

The winter at Bishopsgate was to the poet a season of self-communion, and of melancholy tempered by love, that is marvellously reproduced in his poem. His solitude was occasionally broken by visits from such friends as Hogg, Peacock, and a Quaker physician, Dr. Pope, with whom Shelley discussed theology in amicable fashion. "I like to hear thee talk, friend Shelley; I see thou art very deep." We catch an echo of those serene discussions in the dialogue published by Shelley in 1814, "A Refutation of Deism," which we have already mentioned.

Meanwhile he was reading Greek authors with Hogg and Peacock, and teaching Mary Latin.

* "Alastor" was published at the beginning of 1816, with "Stanzas to Coleridge," Stanzas, April, 1814, "Mutability," "Death," "A Summer Evening Churchyard," "Lines to Wordsworth," the translation of "A Sonnet by Dante," a translation of some lines from "Moschus," and the "Demon of the World," from "Queen Mab."

"Mary," he wrote to Hogg in September, 1815, "has finished the fifth book of the '*Æneid*,'* and her progress in Latin is such as to satisfy my best expectations."

In her Biographical and Critical Notes on Shelley, Mary informs us that the poet felt within himself an equal inclination for "poetry and metaphysical discussions," and that "resolving on the former," he engaged "in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England," without neglecting the "constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament—the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others—the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight."

There remains to us only a fragment which can be referred to Shelley's passion for metaphysics, but it is sufficient almost to cause regret that poetry should have suddenly stayed his hand. His philosophical essays belong to that year (1815), and treat of his favourite subjects of meditation, *i.e.* Life, Death, a Future State, Love, the Human Mind, the Phenomena of Dreams, etc. It is evident throughout that Berkeley's idealism has prevailed over the materialistic tendencies contracted by Shelley when studying the French philosophers of the eighteenth century; he is a convinced upholder of the "Intellectual System." No philosopher has so loudly condemned the enervating doctrines of materialism, or exalted so enthusiastically the only reality which in his eyes is deserving of the name, Spirit; the reality of external things being of "such stuff as dreams are made of."

The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter, its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had

* Shelley himself at this time was reading Lucan's "*Pharsalia*," "a poem, as it appears to me," he says, "of wonderful genius, and transcending Virgil."

early conducted me to materialism. This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking. But I was discontented with such a view of life as it afforded ; man is a being of high aspirations "looking both before and after," whose "thoughts wander through eternity," disclaiming alliance with transience and decay ; incapable of imagining to himself annihilation ; existing but in the future and the past ; being not what he is, but what he has been and shall be. Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within him at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. This is the character of all life and being. Each is at once the centre and the circumference ; the point to which all things are referred, and the line in which all things are contained. . . .

The spiritual chain which links all creatures together, and which places each individual soul in actual contact with the soul of the universe, is Love.

In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks, and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which, by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone.

Metaphysics such as these stand very near to poetry, and Shelley did well in abandoning deduction and dogmatism, to clothe his idealism in the lyrical language that alone was worthy of it. What are Plato, Berkeley, and Malebranche but poets ; and what are metaphysics themselves but poetry and dreams ?

CHAPTER XIII.

JOURNEY TO AND SOJOURN IN SWITZERLAND— SHELLEY AND BYRON.

ON January 24th, 1816, at the very time that Byron's separation from his wife was the scandal of the day, a child was born to gladden the quiet home at Bishopsgate. He received the name of William, after Mary's father.

There was so much resemblance between the lives and circumstances of the two poets that it was fitting they should meet. Both, too, were under the ban of public opinion.

Shelley was only waiting for an opportunity to make the acquaintance of an author of whom he had never lost sight since the time when he had quoted the "Hours of Idleness" in "St. Irvyne." He had sent him a copy of "Queen Mab," and Byron was said to admire the poem, while he disclaimed the authorship of the Notes.

An entirely fortuitous circumstance brought them together.

At that time Byron was on the Committee of Management of Drury Lane Theatre, endeavouring to infuse fresh life into the drama by new masterpieces that neither Walter Scott, Mathurin, Coleridge, nor any one else would.

write for him; offering plays by Sotheby or Burgess which the Committee enthusiastically refused; harassed by authors and authoresses, milliners and Irish adventurers, by dancing masters and actors, "ungovernable people"; quarrelling over ballet-girls, and dining and drinking with Sheridan, Kinnaird, and others.

One morning an elegant girl, rather small, but with marvellous shoulders and arms, lovely hands and feet, with the voice of a siren, and with dark hair and passionate dark eyes, introduced herself to Byron. She was Jane Clairmont, or "Claire." She had come to solicit the poet's interest in order to obtain an engagement at the theatre, and Byron interested himself so much, that he immediately made her his mistress and arranged to meet her at Geneva. While Byron, who set out on April 25th, was travelling in princely fashion towards Geneva, by way of Flanders and the Rhine, Shelley, who left England early in May, accompanied by Claire, Mary, and the little William and his nurse, was journeying for the second time to Paris.

We must now record the commencement of a most romantic and mysterious occurrence in our poet's romantic life.

The night before Shelley's departure from London (the story was related to Byron and Medwin by him, shortly before his death), he received a visit from a married lady, "young, handsome, and of noble connections," who confessed to him that she, although he was personally unknown to her, had long adored him in her secret soul, and had resolved to belong to, and follow him to the ends of the world. Shelley explained to her that he was not free to dispose of himself, softening his refusal as far as possible, and received the adieux of his beautiful and

interesting visitor. Thenceforth, she followed in his footsteps, traced him to Switzerland, back to England, then to Italy, and died at Naples, to Shelley's inconsolable grief. Most of his friends and biographers are inclined to look upon this sad and gentle lady who follows the loved footsteps, as an imaginary incarnation of the ideal woman whom he vainly sought in flesh and blood; in one word, as a poetic hallucination. But although we are ready to acknowledge, as we have already stated in our notice of Shelley's novels, that he was apt to introduce the creatures of his imagination into the realities of life, and that in particular, certain passages in his poems, even those which, like "*Alastor*,"* were written before the journey to Switzerland, contain striking allusions to the mysterious sympathies which attract "the young maidens" to Shelley; still it is difficult to accept hallucination as an explanation of incidents so prolonged, so precise, and so extraordinary. Moreover, as we shall see, there are mysterious allusions in the poems written while at Naples, that can hardly be explained except by accepting the truth of Medwin's narrative. That the sceptical Byron did not so accept it, is not surprising, and no more convinces us than do the gratuitous assurances of Mr. Jeaffreson.†

Unprovided with letters of introduction, and without acquaintances in Paris, the travellers were compelled to wait at their hotel until the French officials, who had become suspicious since the escape of *La Valette*, should please to countersign their passports. They found the French less courteous to English folk than before the last

* Vol. I., p. 84.

† Mr. Rossetti, without coming to a positive conclusion, admits the great probability of the truth of the story. Mr. Dowden is of the same opinion.

invasion of the Allies; ill-humour and discontent were visible on every countenance.

Nor is it wonderful that they should regard the subjects of a Government which fills their country with hostile garrisons, and sustains a detested dynasty on the throne, with an acrimony and indignation of which that Government alone is the proper object. This feeling is honourable to the French, and encouraging to all those of every nation in Europe who have a fellow-feeling with the oppressed, and who cherish an unconquerable hope that the cause of liberty must at length prevail.

Four days later they reached Champagnolles, a little village situated in the depths of the mountains, and the awful desolation of the Rousses and Nion passes was presently exchanged for one of the most smiling of landscapes. In the Hôtel Sécheron at Geneva, the travellers awoke next morning to a view of the lake and the Alps.

To what a different scene are we now arrived! To the warm sunshine, and to the humming of sun-loving insects! From the windows of our hotel we see the lovely lake, blue as the heavens which it reflects, and sparkling with golden beams. The opposite shore is sloping and covered with vines. . . . Gentlemen's seats are scattered over these banks, behind which rise the various ridges of black mountains, and towering far above in the midst of its snowy Alps, the majestic Mont Blanc, highest and queen of all. Such is the view reflected by the lake; it is a bright summer scene, without any of that sacred solitude and deep seclusion that delighted us at Lucerne.—(*May 17, 1816.*)

Their first proceeding at Geneva was to hire a boat, and every evening at about six o'clock they sailed on the lake, sometimes gliding over its glassy surface, at others speeded along by a strong wind. They seldom returned until ten o'clock, and then, as they approached the shore they were "saluted by the delightful scent of flowers and new-mown grass, and the chirp of the grasshoppers and the song of the evening birds."

The first few days at Geneva were passed thus in a most delightful solitude :

We do not enter into society here, yet our time passes swiftly and delightfully. We read Latin and Italian during the heats of noon, and when the sun declines we walk in the garden of the hotel, looking at the rabbits, relieving fallen cockchafers, and watching the motions of a myriad of lizards, who inhabit a southern wall of the garden.

The lucky trio, "escaped from the gloom of winter and of London," inhale happiness at every pore :

I feel as happy as a new-fledged bird [it is Mary who still writes], and hardly care to what twig I fly, so that I may try my new-fledged wings. A more experienced bird may be more difficult in its choice of a bower ; but in my present temper of mind the budding flowers, the fresh grass of spring, and the happy creatures about me, that live and enjoy these pleasures, are quite enough to afford me exquisite delight, even though clouds should shut out Mont Blanc from my sight.

Ten days after their arrival, Lord Byron, with his inseparable companion Polidori, came to the Sécheron Hotel, where he remained for a few days in the company of his new friends. Soon, however, the two parties separated, outwardly at least, Byron removing to the Villa Diodati,* and the Shelleys settling towards the end of May in a cottage known as Campagne Chapuis, or Campagne Mont Alègre, turning its back on Mont Blanc, and facing the sombre view of the Jura, behind which they nightly watched the setting of the sun. At their feet lay the lake, and their boat was moored in a little creek. The clear splendid weather of their early stay broke up, rain and storm detained our travellers within doors. All seemed to them grand and majestic ;

* It was at Geneva that Milton, on his return from Italy in 1639, had paid a visit to his friend Dr. John Diodati, a Geneva Professor of Theology.

amid the wild scenery, storms were more terrible and grandiose; and in the intervals of fine weather the sun shone with a brightness and warmth unknown in England. They were deeply interested in the phenomena of Nature, and watched them with a patience worthy of professional astronomers. Shelley, who is, beyond all others, the painter of storm and tempest, garnered up colours and pictures for future description.

"We watch them," writes Mary, June 1st, 1816, "as they approach from the opposite side of the lake, observing the lightning play among the clouds in various parts of the heavens, and dart in jagged figures upon the piny heights of Jura, dark with the shadow of the overhanging cloud, while perhaps the sun is shining cheerily upon us. One night we *enjoyed* a finer storm than I had ever before beheld. The lake was lit up, the pines on Jura made visible, and all the scene illuminated for an instant, when a pitchy blackness succeeded, and the thunder came in frightful bursts over our heads amid the darkness.

Compared with such splendid spectacles the narrow and ill-paved streets, and the meaningless and unbeautiful buildings of Geneva, offered few attractions to the lovers of Nature.

But they gazed with interest on Rousseau's obelisk standing in the Promenade of Plain-Palais, where the people took vengeance, during the Revolution, on the magistrates of Geneva for having banished the great philosopher, "and where," says Mary, "from respect to the memory of their predecessors none of the present magistrates ever walk."

The most striking characteristic of the people of Geneva, besides their Puritanism, is the equality between the various classes of citizens, which is due to the greater liberty and the higher culture of the working classes :

"Nevertheless," continues Mary, "the peasants of Switzerland may not emulate the vivacity and grace of the

French. . . . Nothing is more pleasant than to listen to the evening song of the vine-dressers. They are all women, and most of them have harmonious although masculine voices. The theme of their ballads consists of shepherds, love, flocks, and the sons of kings who fall in love with beautiful shepherdesses. Their tunes are monotonous, but it is sweet to hear them in the stillness of the evening, while we are enjoying the sight of the setting sun, either from the hill behind the house or from the lake."

On the 23rd of June, Shelley and Byron made an excursion round the lake together. We will leave Shelley to tell the story himself:

Montalègre, near Coligni, Geneva, *July 12.*

It is nearly a fortnight since I have returned from Vevey. This journey has been on every account delightful, but most especially because I then first knew the divine beauty of Rousseau's imagination as it exhibits itself in "Julie." It is inconceivable what an enchantment the scene itself lends, to those delineations from which its own most touching charm arises. But I will give you an abstract of our voyage, which lasted eight days, and if you have a map of Switzerland you can follow me.

We left Montalègre at half-past two on the 23rd of June. The lake was calm, and after three hours of rowing, we arrived at Hermance, a beautiful little village containing a ruined tower, built, the villagers say, by Julius Cæsar. . . .

Leaving Hermance, we arrived at sunset at the village of Nerni. *After looking at our lodgings, which were gloomy and dirty, we walked out by the side of the lake. It was beautiful to see the vast expanse of these purple and misty waters, broken by the craggy islets near to its slant and "beached margin." There were many fish sporting in the lake, and multitudes were collected close to the rocks to catch the flies which inhabited them.

On returning to the village we sat on a wall beside the lake, looking at some children who were playing a game like *ninipins*. The children here appeared in an extraordinary way deformed and diseased. Most of them were crooked, and with enlarged throats; but one little boy had such exquisite grace in his mien and motions as I never before saw equalled in a child. His countenance was beautiful for the expression with which it overflowed. There was a mixture of pride and gentleness in his eyes and lips—the indications of sensibility, which his education will probably

pervert to misery, or seduce to crime ; but there was more of gentleness than of pride, and it seemed that the pride was tamed from its original wildness by the habitual exercise of milder feelings. My companion gave him a piece of money which he took without speaking, with a sweet smile of easy thankfulness, and then with an unembarrassed air turned to his play. All this might scarcely be ; but the imagination surely could not forbear to breathe into the most inanimate forms some likeness of its own visions, on such a serene and glowing evening, in this remote and romantic village, beside the calm lake that bore us hither.

On returning to our inn, we found that the servant had arranged our rooms, and deprived them of the greater portion of their former disconsolate appearance. They reminded my companion of Greece ; it was five years, he said, since he had slept in such beds. The influence of the recollections excited by this circumstance on our conversation gradually faded, and I retired to rest. . . .

The next morning we passed Yvoire, a scattered village with an ancient castle, whose houses are interspersed with trees, and which stands at a little distance from Nerni on the promontory which bounds a deep bay, some miles in extent. So soon as we arrived at this promontory, the lake began to assume an aspect of wilder magnificence. The mountains of Savoy, whose summits were bright with snow, descended in broken slopes to the lake ; on high, the rocks were dark with pine forests, which become deeper and more immense, until the ice and snow mingle with the points of naked rock that pierce the blue air ; but below, groves of walnut, chestnut, and oak, with openings of lawny fields, attested the milder climate.

As soon as we had passed the opposite promontory, we saw the river Drance, which descends from between a chasm in the mountains, and makes a plain near the lake, intersected by its divided streams. Thousands of *besolets*, beautiful water-birds, like sea-gulls, but smaller, with purple on their backs, take their station on the shallows, where its waters mingle with the lake. As we approached Evian, the mountains descended more precipitously to the lake, and masses of intermingled wood and rock overhung its shining spire. . . .

About half-an-hour after we arrived at Evian, a few flashes of lightning came from a dark cloud, directly overhead, and continued after the cloud had dispersed. "*Diespiter per pura tonantes egit equos*," a phenomenon which certainly had no influence on me, corresponding with that which it produced on Horace.

The appearance of the inhabitants of Evian is more

wretched, diseased, and poor, than I ever recollect to have seen. The contrast, indeed, between the subjects of the King of Sardinia, and the citizens of the independent republics of Switzerland, affords a powerful illustration of the blighting effects of despotism. . . . In the space of a few miles. They have mineral waters here, *eux savonneuses* they call them. In the evening I heard my companion's rank and name, he apologised that the Empress Maria

We here heard (Meillerie) . . . in remembrance of Saint-Louisa had slept at Meillerie. I find that the common sentiments of human nature can's duties and its enjoyments, when Genius pleads for their admission at the gate of Power. . . . We dined there, the essence of the mountain best I have ever tasted, the very essence of the mountain flowers, and as fragrant. Perhaps the village derives its name from this production. *Acclerie* is the well-known scene of Saint-Preux's visionary tale; but Meillerie is indeed enchanted ground. Rousseau no magician. . . .

The lake appeared somewhat calmer as we left Meillerie, sailing close to the banks, whose magnificence augmented with the turn of every promontory. But we congratulated ourselves too soon. The wind gradually increased in violence until it blew tremendously; and as it came from the remotest extremity of the lake, produced waves of a frightful height, and covered the whole surface with a chaos of foam. One of our boatmen, who was a dreadfully stupid fellow, persisted in holding the sail at a time when the boat was on the point of being driven under water by the hurricane. On discovering his error, he let it entirely go, and the boat for a moment refused to obey the helm; in addition, the rudder was so broken as to render the management of it very difficult; one wave fell in, and then another. My companion, an excellent swimmer, took off his coat. I did the same, and we sat with our arms crossed, every instant expecting to be swamped. The sail was, however, again held, the boat obeyed the helm; and, still in imminent peril from the immensity of the waves, we arrived in a few minutes at a sheltered port in the village of St. Gingoux.

I felt at this near prospect of death a mixture of sensations, among which terror entered, though but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine. When we arrived at St. Gingoux, the inhabitants

who stood on the shore, unaccustomed to see a vessel as frail as ours, and fearing to venture at all on such a sea, exchanged looks of wonder and congratulation with our boatmen, who, as well as ourselves, were well pleased to set foot on shore.

St. Gingoux is even more beautiful than Meillerie. The mountains are higher, and their loftiest points of elevation descend more abruptly to the lake. On high the aerial summits still cherish great depths of snow in their ravines, and in the paths of their unseen torrents. One of the highest of these is called Roche de St. Julien, beneath whose pinnacles the forests become deeper and more extensive. The chestnut gives a peculiarity to the scene, which is most beautiful, and will make a picture in my memory, distinct from all other mountain scenes which I have ever before visited.

As we arrived here early, we took a *voiture* to visit the mouths of the Rhone. We went between the mountains and the lake, under groves of mighty chestnut-trees, beside perpetual streams, which are nourished by the snows above, and form stalactites on the rocks over which they fall. We saw an immense chestnut-tree which had been overthrown by the hurricane of the morning. The place where the Rhone joins the lake was marked by a line of tremendous breakers; the river is as rapid as when it leaves the lake, but is muddy and dark. . . . We returned to St. Gingoux before sunset, and I passed the evening in reading "Julie."

As my companion rises late, I had time before breakfast on the ensuing morning to hunt the waterfalls of the river that fall into the lake at St. Gingoux. The stream is indeed, from the declivity over which it falls, only a succession of waterfalls, which roar over the rocks with a perpetual sound, and suspend their unceasing spray on the leaves and flowers that overhang and adorn its savage banks. The path that conducted along this river sometimes avoided the precipices of its shores by leading through meadows, sometimes threaded the base of the perpendicular and caverned rocks. I gathered in these meadows a nosegay of such flowers as I never saw in England, and which I thought more beautiful for that rarity.

On my return, after breakfast we sailed for Clarens, determining first to see the three mouths of the Rhone, and then the Castle of Chillon. The day was fine and the water calm. We passed from the blue waters of the lake over the stream of the Rhone, which is rapid even at a great distance from its confluence with the lake; the turbid waters mixed with those of the lake, but mixed with them unwillingly. (See "Nouvelle Héloïse," Letter 17, part 4.) I read "Julie" all

day ; an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility. Meillerie, the Castle of Chillon, Clarens, the mountains of La Valais and Savoy present themselves to the imagination as monuments of things that were once familiar, and of beings that were once dear to it. They were created, indeed, by one mind, but a mind so powerfully bright as to cast a shade of falsehood on the records that are called reality.

We passed on to the Castle of Chillon,* and visited its dungeons and towers. These prisons are excavated below the lake ; the principal dungeon is supported by seven columns, whose branching capitals support the roof. Close to the very walls the lake is 800 feet deep ; iron rings are fastened to these columns, and on them were engraven a multitude of names, partly those of visitors, and partly doubtless those of the prisoners, of whom now no memory remains, and who thus beguiled a solitude which they have long ceased to feel. One date was as ancient as 1670. At the commencement of the Reformation, and, indeed, long after that period, this dungeon was the receptacle of those who shook or who denied the system of idolatry from the effects of which mankind is even now slowly emerging.

Close to this long and lofty dungeon was a narrow cell, and beyond it one larger and far more lofty and dark, supported upon two unornamented arches. Across one of these arches was a beam, now black and rotten, on which prisoners were hung in secret. I never saw a monument more terrible of that cold and inhuman tyranny which it has been the delight of man to exercise over man. It was indeed one of those many tremendous fulfilments which render the "*perniciis humani generis*" of the great Tacitus so solemn and irrefragable a prophecy. . . .

We proceeded with a contrary wind to Clarens against a heavy swell. I never felt more strongly than on landing at Clarens, that the spirit of old times had deserted its once cherished habitation. A thousand times, thought I, have Julia and St.-Preux walked on this terraced road, looking towards these mountains which I now behold ; nay, treading on the ground where I now tread. From the window of our lodging our landlady pointed out "*le bosquet de Julie*." At least the inhabitants of this village are impressed with an idea that the persons of that romance had actual existence. In the evening we walked thither. It is indeed Julia's wood. The hay was

* Reminiscences of the Castle of Chillon occur in many places in "*The Revolt of Islam*."

making under the trees ; the trees themselves were aged, but vigorous, and interspersed with younger ones, which are destined to be their successors, and in future years when we are dead, to afford a shade to future worshippers of Nature, who love the memory of that tenderness and peace of which this was the imaginary abode. We walked forward among the vineyards, whose narrow terraces overlook this affecting scene. Why did the cold maxims of the world compel me at this moment to repress the tears of melancholy transport which it would have been so sweet to indulge immeasurably, even until the darkness of night had swallowed up the objects which excited them ?

I forgot to remark, what indeed my companion remarked to me,* that our danger from the storm took place precisely in the spot where Julie and her lover were nearly overset, and where St.-Preux was tempted to plunge with her into the lake.

On the following day we went to see the Castle of Clarens, a strong, square house, with very few windows, surrounded by a double terrace that overlooks the valley, or rather the plain of Clarens. The road which conducted to it wound up the steep ascent through woods of walnut and chestnut. We gathered roses on the terrace in the feeling that they might be the posterity of some planted by Julie's hand. We sent their dead and withered leaves to the absent.

We went again to the "bosquet de Julie," and found that the precise spot was now utterly obliterated, and a heap of stones marked the place where the little chapel had once stood. Whilst we were execrating the author of this brutal folly, our guide informed us that the land belonged to the Convent of St. Bernard, and that this outrage had been committed by their orders. I knew before that if avarice could harden the hearts of men, a system of prescriptive religion has an influence far more inimical to natural sensibility. I know that an isolated man is sometimes restrained by shame from outraging the venerable feelings arising out of the memory of genius, which once made Nature even lovelier than itself ; but associated man holds it as the very sacrament of his union to forswear all delicacy, all benevolence, all remorse ; all that is true, or tender, or sublime.

We sailed from Clarens to Vevey. . . .

It was at Vevey that Rousseau conceived the design of "Julia." . . .

* At a later period Byron remarked to Medwin : "It would have been a more classical end, to have perished there, but a less pleasant one."

The rain detained us two days at Ouchy. We, however, visited Lausanne, and saw Gibbon's house. We were shown the decayed summer-house where he finished his *History*, and the old acacias on the terrace from which he saw Mont Blanc, after having written the last sentence. There is something grand and even touching in the regret which he expresses at the completion of his task. It was conceived amid the ruins of the Capitol. The sudden departure of his accustomed and cherished toil must have left him like the death of a dear friend, sad and solitary.

My companion gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him.* I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau, the contemplation of whose imperishable creations had left no vacancy in my heart for mortal things. Gibbon had a cold and unimpassioned spirit. I never felt more inclination to rail at the prejudices which cling to such a thing, than now that Julie and Clarens, Lausanne and the Roman Empire, compelled me to a contrast between Rousseau and Gibbon.

This animated narrative of Shelley's should be compared with Byron's stanzas in the third canto of "*Childe Harold*," of which, as his friend says, Shelley speaks in terms of rapturous praise.

These stanzas begin with the lines :

Clarens ! sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep Love !
Thine air is the young breath of passionate thought ;
Thy trees take root in Love ; the snows above
The very glaciers have his colours caught,
And sunset into rose-hues sees them wrought
By rays which sleep there lovingly ; the rocks,
The permanent crags, tell here of Love, who sought
In them a refuge from the worldly shocks,
Which stir and sting the soul with hope that woos, then mocks.

These scenes profoundly impressed Shelley's imagination also, and transformed themselves there into new creations, keeping only that amount of reality which creative genius retains when idealising Nature.

* Byron wrote to Murray after the visit to Ouchy on the 27th June, 1816.

Shelley's landscapes resemble those of Leonardo da Vinci, or other old Italian masters.

Anything we could say of Shelley's* enthusiasm at this epoch for Rousseau, would pale beside his enthusiastic expressions of admiration for the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*" in the passage we have quoted, but, although Shelley was powerfully attracted by Rousseau's admirable portrayal of Nature, and his incomparable interpretation of the purest and sweetest feelings of love, he was not blind to the errors of the thinker and the philosopher; and although, like him, Shelley taught men to return to the truth and simplicity of Nature, and was like him the irreconcilable foe of all social conventions, he strenuously opposed Rousseau's interpretation of the word "Nature," and nothing seemed to him more false than the wish that mankind should revert to the state

* Shelley seems to have taken great interest from an early age in all that concerned Rousseau. Hogg quotes an anecdote of Jean-Jacques that appealed to the poet's imagination, and will be appreciated by Rousseau's admirers. It is strange to find a hitherto unpublished anecdote in Hogg's book :

"Our kind friend J. F. N. informed us that some old gentleman of his acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten, came over from France in the packet with Rousseau and David Hume. The Scotch philosopher was sick, and kept below, but the citizen of Geneva was quite well and lively, and remained on deck. He was sociable, talkative, and inquisitive, and asked many questions. Observing this gentleman writing upon a substance that was new to him, he begged to know what it might be. It was ass's skin, a substance much used formerly in pocket-books, but now seldom to be seen. The nature of the tablet was explained to him ; how well it received and retained the marks of a black-lead pencil, and how readily the characters were effaced when it was wetted. Rousseau was much surprised at the novelty, upon which the gentleman presented him with the pocket-book, and it was accepted with great and almost childish eagerness. During the remainder of the voyage, with the infantine simplicity of genius, the most eloquent of philosophers was constantly playing with his new toy ; busily

of savages and of brutes. Uncivilised man seemed to him the most pernicious and miserable of beings.

"Man," he said, "was once a wild beast, who has become, through civilisation, a moralist, a metaphysician, an astronomer, and a poet. Lucretius and Virgil, in order to prove the progress of human nature, had but to compare themselves with the cannibals of Scythia. Where justice increases, so does equality; and there is more justice now, because civilisation is more widely distributed."

He severely condemned the part taken by Rousseau in the eighteenth century, as an instigation to the Revolution:

Rousseau gave license by his writings to passions that only incapacitate and contract the human heart.

But with this exception, his admiration for Rousseau grew with his years. In his "Essay on Christianity," he goes so far as to compare him to Christ:

He is perhaps the philosopher among the moderns who, in the structure of his feelings and understanding, resembles most nearly the mysterious sage of Judea. It is impossible to read those passionate words in which Jesus Christ upbraids the pusillanimity and sensuality of mankind without being strongly reminded of the more connected and systematic enthusiasm of Rousseau.

writing upon the ass's skin, wiping out and writing again. Nevertheless, it is by no means impossible that the fanciful, capricious, suspicious man soon afterwards might take offence at the gift, imagine that some treachery lurked in it; that there was a snake in the grass; that the smooth tablet was contrived purposely to betray and ruin him, poisoned by the deceitful David, and thereupon it might be committed to the flames. A subtle poison infused by the envenomed malice of the jealous, insidious Hume into the ass's skin, gradually ascending up the pencil into the fingers, and proceeding thence along the arm, and finally arriving at the heart, and thereupon instantaneous death; the bare idea of such an incident was charming to Shelley, and every tablet of ass's skin was a page of romance."

In this respect Shelley is the true son of both ; but Rousseau had so entirely captivated his heart and his imagination, that in the last and uncompleted poem, in which he endeavoured to sum up all his metaphysical and moral teaching on life and human destiny, he invokes the spirit of Rousseau to lead him through the Hell of this world, just as Dante took Virgil, the mild prophet-poet, for his guide in the infernal regions.

One week spent in intimacy with Byron sufficed for Shelley to discover the real Byron beneath the fantastic appearances that concealed him from the vulgar gaze. On July 17th, in a letter to Peacock, he pronounces the following categorical opinion :

Lord Byron is an exceedingly interesting person ; and as such, is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds ?

His opinion of his noble friend hardly varied after this. He continued to admire his genius, which he regarded as "capable of rendering him the redeemer of his degraded country, if he would but direct it to that end."

In society there is no more agreeable or unassuming being ; as a companion he is good-humoured, candid, and witty ; but Byron's qualities are tarnished by pride. He compares his extraordinary faculties with the little minds about him, and conceives an intense conviction of the nothingness of life, and is consumed by impatience and self-concentration that degenerate into scepticism. Shelley could not pardon his immoral life, and endeavoured more than once to raise him from the slough ; their intimacy in Switzerland produced the happiest effect on Byron, whose mind was elevated and enlarged by contact with that of his friend. The reader must be blind indeed who cannot see traces of

Shelley's influence in the third canto of "*Childe Harold*," and the accompanying notes. Moore* mentions and deplors that influence. He says:

On philosophy and poetry the conversation of the two poets generally turned, and as might be expected from Lord Byron's facility in receiving new impressions, the opinions of his companion were not altogether without some influence on his mind. Here and there among those fine bursts of passion and description that abound in the third canto of "*Childe Harold*," may be discovered traces of that mysticism of meaning, that sublimity losing itself in its own vagueness, which so much characterised the writings of his extraordinary friend, and in one of the notes we find Shelley's favourite Pantheism of Love thus glanced at.†

It is probable that Byron read some portions of the third canto to his friends, during the evenings at Diodati,‡ although they were mostly spent in animated conversation between Byron and Shelley, to which Mary listened with passionate attention; Byron's voice touched her to the heart.

"I do not think," she writes in her journal, "that any person's voice has the same power of awakening melancholy in

* Moore's "*Life of Byron*," Vol. III., p. 65.

† See note beginning: "But this is not all; the feeling with which all around Clarens," etc.

‡ On May 8th of the following year, Mary writes in her journal: "Do you not remember, Shelley, when you first read it to me? One evening after returning from Diodati. It was in our little room at Chapuis. The lake was before us, and the mighty Jura. That time is past, and this will also pass, when I may weep to read these words, and again moralise on the flight of time. . . . I think of our excursions on the lake. How we saw him when he came down to us, or welcomed our arrival with a good-humoured smile! How vividly does each verse of his poem recall some scene of this kind to my memory! This time will soon also be a recollection. We may see him again, and again enjoy his society; but the time will also arrive when that which is now an anticipation will be only in the memory. Death will at length come, and in the last moment all will be a dream."

me as Albè's. I have been accustomed, when hearing it, to listen and speak little ; another's voice, not mine, ever replied—a voice whose strings are broken. When Albè ceases to speak, I expect to hear *that other* voice, and when I hear another instead, it jars strangely with every association . . . and thus . . . when Albè speaks, and Shelley does not answer, it is as thunder without rain—the form of the sun without heat or light."

One evening (it was June 18th), after a conversation on apparitions and ghosts, Byron recited some lines from Coleridge's "Christabel," which had just been published :

She unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast :
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold ! her bosom and half her side—
Hideous, deformed, and pale of hue,
A sight to dream of, not to tell !
And she is to sleep by Christabel.

Seized with horror, Shelley uttered a piercing cry ; he suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of, who had eyes instead of nipples. When he had recovered and calm was restored, Byron proposed that each one should write a ghost story. Shelley began one, which, as usual, he soon abandoned. Byron began his celebrated tale of the "Vampire," which Polidori finished and published three years later, while Mary wrote her "Frankenstein ; or, the Modern Prometheus."

A few days afterwards Shelley made another Alpine excursion, but this time he was accompanied by Mary and Claire. They left Geneva on July 20th, and passing through Bonneville, Cluses, Sallanches, and Servoz, they reached the valley of Chamouni ; Shelley was much impressed with a waterfall near Maglans, at least twelve hundred feet high, dashing from "the overhanging

brow of a black precipice, imitating a veil of the most exquisite woof." At Servoz, Mont Blanc was before them.

"Mont Blanc was before us," writes Shelley, "but it was covered with cloud ; its base, furrowed with dreadful gaps, was seen above. Pinnacles of snow intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc, shone through the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew—I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder not unallied to madness. And, remember, this was all one scene ; it all pressed home to our regard and imagination. Though it embraced a vast extent of space, the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path ; the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines, and black with its depth below, so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve, which rolled through it, could not be heard above—all was as much our own as if we had been the creators of such impressions in the minds of others as now occupied our own. Nature was the poet whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest."

The sight of the Montanvert and Les Bossons glaciers caused him unspeakable rapture ; the dazzling white of precipice and pinnacles—the latter resembling so many glass needles beneath a net of frosted silver ; the masses of ice slipping down and breaking into powder as they struck the rocks beneath, the slow but incessant movement of the glaciers encroaching in their irresistible march on the surrounding pasture lands and forests, accomplishing in the course of centuries the destruction that would be completed in one hour by a torrent of lava, and bearing with them huge rocks and piled-up heaps of sand and stones from their mountain sources ; all these wondrous sights moved him to admiration and to philosophical reflection on the destiny of our globe ; on the sublime but sombre theory of Buffon, that the earth, at a certain period, will become a frozen mass, by reason of the

spread of the ice from the Polar regions and higher points of the earth's surface.

"Do you who assert the supremacy of Ahriman," he wrote, in a moment of poetical exaltation, "imagine him throned among these desolating snows, among these palaces of death and frost, so sculptured in this their terrible magnificence by the adamantine hand of necessity, and that he casts around him, as the first essays of his final usurpations, avalanches, torrents, rocks, and thunders, and, above all, these deadly glaciers, at once the proof and symbols of his reign;—add to this the degradation of the human species, who in these regions are half-deformed or idiotic, and most of whom are deprived of anything that can excite admiration. This is part of the subject more mournful and less sublime, but such as neither the poet nor the philosopher should disdain to regard."

He afterwards compares Mont Blanc to the god of the Stoics, a vast animal whose frozen blood for ever circulated within his stony veins.

It was at the foot of the giant mountain that Shelley composed his poem of "Mont Blanc," "under the immediate impression," he says himself, "of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang."

In this admirable poem, wherein Shelley truly tries to vie with the horror and beauty of Nature, we find his ideal Ahriman, transformed into the personification of the "old Earthquake demon," teaching

. . . her young
Ruin. Were these their toys? . . .

He interrogates the wilderness—the splendid and funereal chaos; to others they reply with Doubt and Death; to Shelley the mysterious tongue teaches a

. . . faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be
But for such faith with Nature reconciled;

and by that reconciliation, that union of the spirit of man with the great spirit of Nature, he finds a means of raising himself above all mortal passions, and all the sorrows of humanity.

Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe.

Shelley gazes on Mont Blanc piercing the infinite sky, still, snowy, and serene, towering far above the unearthly shapes, scarred, ghastly, and riven, that are piled around; the image of Nature's spirit, of the secret strength of things which govern thought, without which Mont Blanc itself, and earth, and stars, and sea would be but silence, solitude, and vacancy.*

It is clear, from the thought expressed at the close of the poem—a thought which is frequently repeated in Shelley's works—that Pantheism with him was pure idealism. And it becomes still more incontrovertible on perusal of his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," which was also written while in Switzerland, and for progress of thought and beauty of form is one of the culminating points in Shelley's poetry; it is an invocation of his real Muse—that "unseen Power," that "Spirit of Beauty" called "Demon, Ghost, or Heaven," whose "light alone" "gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream."

All Shelley is in that exquisite Hymn.

Another remarkable personage, much esteemed by our poet, was at this epoch introduced to Shelley: Matthew Gregory Lewis, author of "The

* On leaving Montanvert, Shelley had written in the Travellers' Album the two beautiful lines—

"God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer, and let the ice-plains echo God!"

In another inn Album, in the same handwriting, was written—

Εἰμὶ φιλόανθρωπος, δημοχράτιχος τ' ἄθεος τε.

Lord Byron is said to have effaced the latter inscription.

Monk." It was now that Lewis added a codicil to his will, witnessed by the three friends (Byron, Shelley, and Polidori), requiring the heir of his Jamaica estates to visit the property every three years in order to maintain the privileges and rights of the slaves who should belong to the then proprietor.*

Yet amid all the enjoyment of travel and the pecuniary anxieties it entails, Shelley looked wistfully towards England, where he had passed many happy moments, and longed to return thither as soon as possible. On May 15th, 1816, he wrote to Peacock :

You live by the shores of a tranquil stream, among low and woody hills. You live in a free country, where you may act without restraint, and possess that which you possess in security ; and so long as the name of country and the selfish conceptions it includes shall subsist, England, I am persuaded, is the most free and the most refined. . . .

So long as man is such as he now is, the experience of which I speak will never teach him to despise the country of his birth ; far otherwise, like Wordsworth, he will never know what love subsists between that and him until absence shall have made its beauty more heartfelt ; our poets and our philosophers, our mountains and our lakes, the rural lanes and fields which are so especially our own, are ties which, until I become utterly senseless, can never be broken asunder.

These, and the memory of them, if I never should return, these and the affections of the mind, with which having been once united, are inseparable (*sic*), will make the name of England dear to me for ever, even if I should permanently return to it no more. . . . My present intention is to return to England, and to make that most excellent of nations my perpetual resting-place.

Yet before returning to England for ever, he wished to see more of the world.

"If possible," he wrote on July 17th, "we think of descending the Danube in a boat, of visiting Constantinople and

* Forgues' "Originaux et beaux Esprits de l'Angleterre : " M. G. Lewis. Lewis had just returned from Jamaica, where he had been securing the welfare of the numerous negroes on his plantations.

Athens, then Rome and the Tuscan cities, and returning by the South of France, always following great rivers—the Danube, the Po, the Rhone, and the Garonne. Rivers are not like roads, the work of the hands of man ; they imitate mind, which wanders at will over pathless deserts, and flows through Nature's loveliest recesses, which are inaccessible to anything besides. . . . This Eastern scheme is one which has just seized on our imaginations. I fear that the detail of execution will destroy it, as all other wild and beautiful visions. . . . Tell me, in return, all English news. What has become of my poem ["Alastor"]? I hope it has already sheltered itself in the bosom of its mother, Oblivion, from whose embraces no one could have been so barbarous as to tear it except me.

"Tell me of the political state of England ; its literature, of which when I speak, Coleridge is in my thoughts ; yourself, lastly your own employments, your historical labours. . . .

"You must shelter my roofless Penates, dedicate some new temple to them, and perform the functions of a priest in my absence. They are innocent deities, and their worship neither sanguinary nor absurd.

"Leave Mammon and Jehovah to those who delight in wickedness and slavery ; their altars are stained with blood, or polluted with gold, the price of blood. But the shrines of the Penates are good wood fires, or window-frames intertwined with creeping plants ; their hymns are the purring of kittens, the hissing of kettles, the long talks over the past and the dead, the laugh of children, the warm wind of summer filling the quiet house, and the pelting storm of winter struggling in vain for entrance. . . .

"I trust entirely to your discretion on the subject of a house. Certainly the Forest engages my preference, because of the sylvan nature of the place and the beasts with which it is filled. But I am not insensible to the beauties of the Thames. . . .

"Recollect, however, we are now choosing a fixed, settled, eternal home, and as such its internal qualities will affect us more constantly than those which consist in the surrounding scenery, which, whatever it may be at first, will shortly be no more than the colours with which our own habits shall invest it."

The fixed, settled, and lasting home for which Shelley was seeking, was destined to endure barely two years.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHELLEY AT BATH—SUICIDE OF HARRIET AND MARRIAGE OF SHELLEY—THE HERMIT OF MARLOW—"LAON AND CYTHNA"—"PRINCE ATHANASIUS"—ADDRESS TO THE ENGLISH PEOPLE—1816-1818.

ON returning to London, September 7th, 1816, Shelley hastened to join his friend Peacock, and stayed a fortnight with him at Marlow, where he determined to settle, and while the temple of his Penates was being prepared, he removed for a time to Bath.

On October 9th, Mary received an alarming letter ; and Shelley immediately set off for Bristol and Swansea. But the day preceding that of his arrival, October 10th, poor Fanny Imlay had committed suicide in the bedroom of an inn ; a bottle of laudanum lay upon the table by her side with a note which ran thus : " I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has only been a series of pain to those persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare. Perhaps to hear of my death will give you pain ; but you will soon have the blessing of

forgetting that such a creature ever existed as . . .”

As Shelley read this touching farewell, he recalled his last hurried interview with Fanny in London, and penned the mournful stanza :

Her voice did quiver as we parted ;
 Yet knew I not that heart was broken
 From whence it came, and I departed
 Heeding not the words then spoken.
 Misery, O Misery !
 This world is all too wide for thee ! *

This tragic event was soon succeeded by another still more painful to Shelley. On December 14th a letter from Hookham acquainted him with the death of Harriet Westbrook, whose body had been found in the Serpentine. She was twenty-two years of age. Her life, from the date of her separation from Shelley, is somewhat obscure to us. Thornton Hunt asserts that having been deserted by her lover (a captain in the army according to Trelawney), she was thrown on the streets, repudiated by her father and sister, driven from their house, and finally, feeling deserted by the whole universe, her thoughts reverted to the idea of voluntary death, which from childhood had been cherished by her.

Shelley, who had always been mindful of her since their separation, and had provided for her maintenance, had for a few weeks lost sight of her, and was vainly inquiring for her address.

On receiving the fatal news Shelley hastened to London to claim his children, and nothing can

* Mr. Dowden proves satisfactorily that Fanny's death cannot be attributed to an unfortunate attachment for Shelley, as Claire asserts. Her letters, collected by Mr. Dowden, sufficiently explain her suicide as being merely the natural result of the excessive melancholy inherent in her disposition and increased by the nature of her surroundings at Skinner Street.

give a clearer idea of his state of mind than the letter he wrote on the following day to Mary :

I have spent a day, my beloved, of somewhat agonising sensations, such as the contemplation of vice, and folly, and hard-heartedness exceeding all conception must produce. Leigh Hunt has been with me all day, and his delicate and tender attentions to me, his kind speeches of you, have sustained me against the weight of the horror of this event.

The children I have not got. I have seen Longdill, who recommends proceeding with the utmost caution and resolution ; he seems interested. I told him I was under contract of marriage to you, and he said that in such an event all pretence to detain the children would cease. Hunt said very delicately that this would be soothing intelligence to you. Yes, my only hope, my darling love, this will be one among the innumerable benefits which you will have bestowed upon me, and which will still be inferior in value to the greatest of benefits—yourself. It is through you that I can entertain without despair the recollection of the horrors of unutterable villainy that led to this dark, dreadful death. . . . Everything tends to prove, however, that beyond the shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would, in any case, be little to regret. Hookham, Longdill, every one does me full justice ; bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her. There is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks. If they should dare to bring it before Chancery, a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame. . . . Do you, dearest and best, seek happiness—where it ought to reside—in your own pure and perfect bosom ; in the thoughts of how dear and how good you are to me ; how wise and how extensively beneficial you are perhaps now destined to become. Remember my poor babes, Ianthe and Charles. How tender and dear a mother they will find in you—darling William, too ! My eyes overflow with tears. To-morrow I will write again.

Nothing can be more tender and loving than Mary's reply to this letter ; her hand trembles as she thinks of poor Fanny's sad fate :

Poor dear Fanny ! If she had lived until this moment she would have been saved, for my house would then have been a proper asylum for her. . . . How very happy shall I be to possess those darling treasures of yours !

[Ianthe and Charles] . . . There will be a sweet brother and sister for my William, who will lose his pre-eminence as eldest. . . .

Harriet's suicide, following on that of Fanny, was a frightful blow to Shelley; his character was altered by it, and the remembrance haunted him to his last hour. Thornton Hunt writes :

I am well aware that he *had* suffered severely, and that he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes. If exteriorly he appeared to bear this blow philosophically, the reason is he was as undemonstrative as he was profound, and at all times of his life was remarkably free, as De Quincey observes, from "sickly sentimentalism."

From a feeling of delicacy and a regard for appearances, Shelley hesitated as to an immediate marriage with Mary. But on the advice of Peacock and that of Sir Lumley Skeffington, author of a play called "The Word of Honour," and considered to be an infallible judge in such delicate matters, the formal ceremony was gone through without delay.

He needed no hints from Godwin; still less was it, as Mr. Jeaffreson implies, a wish to annoy his father. On December 30th, 1816, the marriage was celebrated at St. Mildred's in presence of Godwin and his wife.

During this time of trial Shelley found some consolation in a new friendship which proved enduring. Until the autumn of 1816, he had no close relations with Leigh Hunt, in whom, however, he had been deeply interested as a victim of intolerance and tyranny.*

* Shelley had expressed his sympathy at the time of Hunt's imprisonment, and it was probably on the occasion of his liberation that he wrote the following sonnet :

For me, my friend, if not that tears did tremble
In my faint eyes, or that my heart beat fast
With feelings that make rapture pain resemble,
Yet from thy voice that falsehood starts aghast.

Hunt had at first contemned the productions of the young poet. It was not until he had read "Alastor" and the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," that he made reparation in the columns of the *Examiner* by an article in which he mentions Shelley as "one of the young poets who promises to shed lustre on the new school." "If the rest answer," he added, "to what we have seen, we shall have no hesitation in announcing him for a very striking and original thinker." The ice was now broken.

Early in November Shelley was at Marlow, and took the opportunity of visiting his new friend at his pretty Hampstead home, in the neighbourhood of Marlow. In January, 1817, the Chancery suit concerning his children by Harriet brought Shelley up to London. The Westbrooks denounced him as author of "Queen Mab," Atheist, and Republican, and he must prepare his defence. Shelley might well fear that the reactionary and intolerant spirit of the times, which had driven Cobbett to America, might visit on him the severe penalties of the law of libel, and that, like Eaton, he might be punished with imprisonment and the stocks. Mary, ever anxious and loving, soon joined him in London.

His literary connection with Hunt and his circle, of which the *Examiner* was the centre and mainspring, was fortunate for Shelley, in diverting his mind from his fears and anxieties; and Mary became intimate with Hunt's wife, the Marianne whose name lives for ever in the poet's verse.

I thank thee! Let the tyrant keep
His chains and tears—yea, let him weep
With rage to see thee freshly risen,
Like strength from slumber, from the prison
In which he vainly hoped the soul to bind,
Which on the chains must prey that fether humankind.

"That was a memorable evening" (February 5th, 1817), writes Mr. Dowden, "when the three 'Young Poets' of his *Examiner* article of three months since—Reynolds, Keats, and Shelley—supped together at Hampstead with their generous critic. 'Keats,' we are told by Leigh Hunt, 'did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him. . . . Keats being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy.'" At Hunt's table Shelley also became acquainted with Charles Lamb—but the latter, to Shelley's regret, drew away from him—and Hazlitt, with whom he discussed politics until three in the morning. With Brougham, also, the great and terrible editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, the advocate of the *Examiner* in Government prosecutions, and his own adviser in the Chancery suit, Shelley now became acquainted, and in Horace Smith he found a true and devoted friend, who, to the ardour of a poet and the zeal of a political reformer, added the sound judgment of a man of business. Shelley himself has sketched him for us. "Is it not odd, that the only truly generous person I ever knew, who had money to be generous with, should be a stockbroker? And he writes poetry, too, and pastoral dramas, and yet knows how to make money, and does make it, and is still generous." And later, in a letter to Mrs. Gisborne, he says :

Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge—all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight—
Are all combined in Horace Smith.

In March, Shelley set up his peaceful Penates in a spacious cottage (Albion House) at Marlow, not far from the Thames. It was surrounded by a large garden, beyond which lay open

meadows leading towards undulating wooded slopes. Eight dormer windows gave a Gothic appearance to the front of the house. The largest room, large enough for a ball-room, but damp and cold, was fitted up by Shelley as a library. His writing-table stood between two life-sized casts of Apollo and Urania.* The household consisted of Shelley, his wife, little William, Claire and little Alba,† Elise, a Swiss nurse, and Harry, the gardener and man-of-all-work.

The happiness of Shelley and Mary was now complete; Mary spent her time in reading, studying, and writing "Frankenstein";‡ Claire also wrote, but her special delight was music; she accompanied herself on the piano, to which she sang in a voice compared by her former music-master, Corri, to a string of pearls, giving the most exquisite delight to Shelley, whose soul was "dissolved" in "consuming ecstasies."§

If the hermitage of Marlow were a temple of poetry, it was also one of friendship. Shelley's friends enjoyed without scruple the generous hospitality he offered them. They were Godwin, Peacock, Hogg, the Hunts, and Horace Smith. But the poet made no acquaintance among the neighbouring commonplace gentry, whom he held in horror.

One of his greatest amusements at Marlow was boating on the river. His little mimic fleets of paper boats no longer sufficed him; he owned

* Mr. Dowden says *Venus*.

† Alba or Allegra, the child of Byron and Claire, was born at Bath on January 12th, 1817. At Marlow she passed for the daughter of a friend in London, sent into the country for her health.

‡ "Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus," 1813 (3 vols.). The most remarkable of Mary's works; the preface was written by Shelley.

§ "To Constantia Singing." A poem addressed to Claire under that name.

a boat, made for both oars and sail, which he had christened the *Vaga* (to which his friends would playfully add the syllable "bond"). Leigh Hunt gives the following account of the daily life of the Hermit of Marlow :

He rose early in the morning, walked and read before breakfast, took that meal sparingly, wrote and studied the greater part of the morning, walked and read again, dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine), conversed with his friends (to whom his house was ever open), again walked out, and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock, when he went to bed. His book was generally Plato or Homer, or one of the Greek tragedians, and the Bible, in which he took a great, though peculiar, and often admiring interest.

While in the enjoyment of these peaceful days consecrated to study and friendship, a blow was struck which was terrible to his feelings as a father, and decisive of the future course of his life.

"Jew" Westbrook's petition to the Court of Chancery, praying that all control over the education of his children should be taken from Shelley, came before the Court in March, 1817, and on the 27th of that month the High Chancellor, Lord Eldon, pronounced judgment in favour of the petitioner. Harriet's children were placed under the guardianship of their grandfather, and that of Dr. Hume, a clergyman of the Anglican Church.

The considerations alleged by Mr. Westbrook were that Shelley had deserted his wife, and that he was an avowed Atheist, who would educate his children in his own principles; "Queen Mab" was quoted to prove his opinions concerning God and marriage, as also his Letter to Lord Ellenborough.

Notwithstanding the skilful defence set up by Shelley, Lord Eldon, who had taken time to

consider his judgment, pronounced against him. Purposely leaving aside the accusation of Atheism, he dwelt principally on the immorality of Shelley's opinions on marriage, and on his conduct as influenced by these.

"There is nothing in evidence before me," said his Lordship, "sufficient to authorise me in thinking that this gentleman has changed, before he arrived at the age of twenty-five, the principles he avowed at nineteen. I think there is ample evidence in the papers, and in his conduct, that no such change has taken place. . . . This is a case in which, as the matter appears to me, the father's principles cannot be misunderstood; in which his conduct, which I cannot but consider as highly immoral, has been established in proof, and established as the effect of those principles; conduct, nevertheless, which he represents to himself and others not as conduct to be considered as immoral, but to be recommended and observed in practice, and as worthy of approbation . . . conduct which the law animadverts upon as inconsistent with the duties of such persons and those of the community."

Shelley was consequently restrained "from intermeddling with the children until the further order of the Court."

Although Shelley did not appeal from this judgment to the House of Lords, yet he did not despair of obtaining justice and a reversal of the odious sentence, in the event of a change in the political situation. In a letter to Peacock, written at Naples in 1819, he says: "We have reports here of a change in the English Ministry—to what does it amount? for, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the Chancery Court."

Meanwhile, the poet vindicated the father, and Lord Eldon acquired in Shelley's indignant verse an immortality he would have sought in vain from his own judicial prose.

Among the poems of 1817, we may read the

terrible curse invoked by an outraged father on him whom he calls the

. . . darkest crest
Of that foul, knotted, many-headed worm
Which rends our mother's bosom—priestly pest !

By those unpractised accents of young speech,
Which he who is a father thought to frame
To gentlest lore such as the wisest teach.
Thou strike the lyre of mind ! oh, grief and shame ! . . .
I curse thee . . .

Nor does Shelley miss a later opportunity of branding him who had torn away his children ; in the "Mask of Anarchy" (1819), he depicts Lord Eldon under the name of Fraud :

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Lord Eldon, an ermine gown.
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to millstones as they fell ;
And the little children who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

The weeping Eldon in "Ædipus Tyrannus" will appear again as "Dakry, the Wizard Minister of Swellfoot."

Thus bereft of two children, Shelley turned an anxious gaze on his little William, lest, in the name of religion and morality, a sacrilegious hand should claim that child too from his father's care. He conceived the project of removing him from his ungrateful country, and seeking beyond the sea the sunny shores of Italy or Greece.

His dream of a lasting abode in free England had vanished ; his health was terribly affected by the successive shocks he had undergone, and required a warmer climate ; it was his duty to live for those who remained to him, those to whom his

life might be a source of happiness, usefulness, safety, and honour, while his death would deprive them of all these things.*

It might be expected that under repeated strokes of misfortune, the poet would bend and sink. But on the contrary, he seemed to acquire new strength and spirit. While anxiously awaiting the decision of the Court, he wrote his longest poem. While the law was branding him as unfit "for the most rudimentary duties of social life," he was preparing to protest more strongly than ever against those principles in the name of which he was condemned; and he pursued with confidence and enthusiasm the moral and social ideal which he had proclaimed, and for which he had already suffered martyrdom. He composed "*Laon and Cythna*."

"The poem was written," says Mary, "in his boat as it floated under the beech-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourished around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lace-makers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. . . . Shelley afforded what alleviation he could.† In the winter,

* Letter to Godwin, Dec. 7, 1817.

† His sojourn at Marlow was one continual exercise of benevolence; many long pages might be filled with the narration of his charitable deeds, as told by his biographers. This period of his life resembles the lives of the Saints. One of his neighbours and friends, Mrs. Madocks, who acted as his almoner during the absence of the Hermit of Marlow, gives the following testimony in 1859: "Every

while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race."

And, in fact, if there is one distinctive mark amid its exuberance of moral, political, and religious teaching in the poem, it is the ardent love of mankind burning, from beginning to end, with irresistible and contagious fire. We find in it precisely the same creed as in "*Queen Mab*"; hatred of tyranny and custom, condemnation of selfishness and cupidity that darken the heart and destroy the energies of man; intense longing to rescue the human race from the ignominious yoke of religion, and woman from the degrading slavery that lowers and corrupts her. But these doctrines are set forth with such passionate conviction, with such forcible and burning eloquence, they are so full of sympathy, love, and hope, that we are carried away, in spite of ourselves, by the deep and rushing stream; we forget to admire the eloquent poetry, because we are bewildered by the magical descriptions, and filled with the strange charm of the marvellous and divine evocations of this new Apocalypse. Shelley himself called his poem a "*Vision of the Nineteenth Century*." He no longer gives us the

spot is sacred that he visited; he was a gentleman that seldom took money about with him, and we received numerous little billets; written sometimes on the leaf of a book, to pay the bearer the sum he specified, sometimes as much as half-a-crown; and one day he came home without shoes, saying that he had no paper, so he gave the poor man his shoes. Like St. Francis, his charity was extended to the dumb creation. He would buy cray-fish of the men who brought them through the streets, and would order his servant to bear them back to their lurking-places in the Thames."

melancholy despair of Alastor who, in his disillusion, seeks rest and oblivion in death; but, revived by love, Shelley, in the person of Laon, his hero, who is the embodiment of ideal devotion to the regeneration and happiness of mankind, combats all the sad realities which oppose that regeneration, and delay the coming of that happiness to which he calls poor erring humanity.

This is the dominant idea of the poem, and Shelley opens the subject by an allegorical myth, in which he depicts, under striking imagery, the history of the old strife between good and evil in the world, such as he conceived it. To the reader it is a somewhat confusing assemblage of the traditions of India and those of Greece, of Manichæism, and of Christianity. Good and evil are twin geniuses—equal gods; in the formidable strife that is waged between them, evil is represented by the eagle, the bird of Jupiter, who was afterwards depicted in the “Prometheus” as personifying the principle of evil; and the serpent is the incarnation of the Morning Star or principle of good, the Avatar of human genius, the Prometheus of the Greeks, the Lucifer or Satan of the Bible.

The fair, mysterious woman who receives the wounded Serpent in her bosom is, in this poem, the incarnation of the Spirit of Nature; assuming the rôle that in “Prometheus” is to be played by Asia—the personification of Divine love, the new Eve, the lover of the Morning Star, of Prometheus—Lucifer.

The whole of this allegory is embodied in human forms in “Laon and Cythna.”

The principal rôle is given to the woman, Cythna.

Shelley, who became a more and more devoted follower of Mary Wollstonecraft since his union

with her daughter, created Cythna to be the prophetess and apostle of the regeneration of her sex. If Laon awakes in Cythna the love of freedom, Cythna awakes in Laon the love of purity; she instinctively loathes the joyless sensuality of which women are the victims, which flings their grace and beauty as a prey to the hyena—lust. She desires for woman equality, liberty, justice, and dignity. She would avenge the outrage and insult woman has too long endured; and her gentle martyrdom is more potent against tyranny than the armed resistance of Laon; her torturers are converted.

All these thoughts are in Mary Wollstonecraft's book, the "*Rights of Women*," but the suavity, the passion, the divine music are Shelley's.*

If ever a poet has existed worthy of the French Revolution, he is certainly the author of the "*Revolt of Islam*." The subject, whatever may be said of it, is as full of inspiration to a poet as the rescue of the Saviour's tomb, or the discovery of a new World.

Michelet, after narrating the stirring episode of the Federation in his "*History of the Revolution*," exclaims: "I have held in my hands for a moment, on the altar of Federation, the uncovered heart of France; I saw the beating of that heroic heart at the first ray of the faith of the future. How then should I worship the little gods of this world? I had caught a glimpse of God. May the sublime vision, that for an instant was ours during the solemn act of French fraternity, lift us above all the moral misery of our times, and give us back a spark of the

* In proof of this the reader is referred to Shelley's enthusiastic panegyric of Mary Wollstonecraft, in the Dedication to his wife, stanza xii. He also alludes, later, to Mary's revolutionary enthusiasm, and to her sojourn in Paris during the early years of the Revolution.

heroic fire that burned in the hearts of our fathers !”

Shelley's great soul divined that which drew from Michelet tears of admiration and love, and it is difficult to read the episode of the Federation in canto v., without feeling the glow of that heroic fire of which Michelet speaks.

Shelley's ideas upon the essence of the moral laws, and the arbitrariness of human institutions, brought him to the logical conclusion that the impediments to marriage, invented by man and sanctioned by religion, are as artificial and as immoral as the law of its indissolubility. To make this conclusion distinctly evident, he placed his hero and heroine, Laon and Cythna, in the relationship of brother and sister—joined together in the most perfect union by the double ties of consanguinity and love.

But it required all Shelley's ingenuousness to believe that such doctrines could be printed and published in prudish England. Nevertheless, they were published ; a few copies of a first edition were circulated ; but so unfavourable an impression was produced that the publishers became alarmed, stopped further publication, and requested Shelley to revise his poem. He was forced, therefore, to abolish all trace of fraternal relationship between Laon and Cythna, and likewise to soften several passages in which Atheism and the stake were too perceptible. “Laon and Cythna,” revised, corrected, and purified, reappeared under the title of the “Revolt of Islam.”

But these concessions to public opinion failed to disarm criticism. Shelley was mistaken when he believed the public would receive his amended work favourably, and without prejudice. Reviled, derided, and stigmatised, “Laon and Cythna” only strengthened the existing prejudice against the author of “Queen Mab.”

The faithful portrayal of his own mind, which Shelley regards as one of the principal merits of "Laon and Cythna," he had previously attempted that same year in "Prince Athanasius," a poem still more personal to himself, and which has remained merely a sketch or fragment. In the whole of Shelley's works there is not one more psychological, profound, or subtle, and if we wish to know the very finest mood of the poet's mind, self-analysed in its most fugitive phases and in its most delicate shades, it is there we must seek it. It is pure spirit analysing and dissecting itself in order to discover the undiscoverable cause of the infinite uneasiness with which it is devoured. But at last Shelley feared to lose his foothold in a world of such subtlety, and forbore to complete the study lest his analysis might become morbid and beyond the comprehension of the most attentive reader. Such as it is, the fragment of "Prince Athanasius" is of the highest importance for what I may designate as the psychological autobiography of the poet. Athanasius, like the youth in "Alastor," seeks throughout the world a human being to love. On the vessel on which he embarks, a lady comes to him in whom he thinks he sees the realisation of his ideal of love and beauty. But soon he perceives that she is but *Pandemos*, or the earthly and unworthy Venus, who, after casting her spell over him, deserts him. Athanasius, beaten down by sorrow, dies. To his death-bed comes Urania, she who alone can fill and satisfy his soul, and kisses his lips. Of this great conception there remain but a few lines of the final fragment, in which Shelley depicts Mary as Urania, and the admirable address to Uranian love,

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
We can desire, O Love !

with which Shelley longs to inebriate the human race.

After the composition of "*Laon and Cythna*," projects of very various kinds occupied Shelley's imagination; he read the pages of Tacitus on Otho, and contemplated writing a poem on the great and melancholy emperor, "who, both tyrant and tyrannicide, hallowed the Roman sword by bathing it in his own blood." But amidst his various projects, his imagination turns towards one object, one type, the incarnation of his own spirit and his own love; a type that since "*Queen Mab*" has been constantly rising higher and higher, becoming more and more pure and ideal as it passed through *Alastor*, *Prince Athanasius*, *Laon* in the "*Revolt of Islam*," and culminated at last in the final conception of *Prometheus*.

The laborious inception of the great idea with which this work is penetrated, its continuing and (to his mind) imperfect progress, and his despair at finding the world deaf to the voice of truth and love, overwhelm his soul, much more than any exterior trials can, with an incurable sadness which he expressed in heart-broken words; he bitterly deplores the impotence of his thoughts which rise and fall in solitude, the vain efforts of his imagination which succeeds only in possessing "one-half of the shadow which it creates."

Once more descend

The shadows of my soul upon mankind;
For to those hearts with which they never blend,
Thoughts are but shadows which the flashing mind,
From the swift clouds which track its flight of fire,
Casts on the gloomy world it leaves behind.

He longs for "a chariot of cloud":

Oh, that a chariot of cloud were mine!
I would sail on the waves of the billowy wind
To the mountain peak and the rocky lake,"

in regions inaccessible to common mortals, and to which he showed the author of "*Childe Harold*" the path, for Byron echoed Shelley in the beautiful stanza, that the latter loved to apply to himself:

On the sea,
The boldest steer but where their ports invite ;
But there are wanderers o'er eternity,
Whose bark drives on and on, and ne'er shall anchored be.

This hopeless quest of the ideal did not, however, prevent Shelley from eagerly watching the course of political events in his native land, and from making use of events which stirred the mind of the people, to set forth his own ideas, express his views, and explain the lessons of contemporary history by the light of his own theories.

The great question of Parliamentary Reform was agitated in England in 1817, and Shelley, ever eager for the rights of the people, published a political pamphlet on the subject, named: "*A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Country, by the Hermit of Marlow.*"

The whole question, in his opinion, was this: Should the people legislate for themselves, or should they be governed by laws made by an assembly which does not even represent even one thousandth part of the community? We may find his reply in his Irish pamphlets: "No, the people may not be thus governed." The actual constitution of Parliament appears to him a spectacle to arouse indignation and horror:

An hospital for lunatics is the only theatre where we can conceive so mournful a comedy to be exhibited as this mighty nation now exhibits. . . . The prerogatives of Parliament constitute a sovereignty which is exercised in contempt of the people . . . for its misery and ruin. . . . It is the object of the Reformers to restore the people to a sovereignty thus held in their contempt, by making the House of Commons a complete representative of the will of the people.

In order to attain this end, Shelley advised the holding of a permanent meeting "to take into consideration the most effectual measures for ascertaining the will" of the people, and put his name down on the subscription-list for necessary expenses, for a sum of £100, being a tenth part of his income. As to the requisite reforms, Shelley thought with Cobbett that annual parliaments ought to be adopted, but he considered the English nation as yet insufficiently prepared for universal suffrage—

The consequence of the immediate extension of the elective franchise to every male adult, would be to place power in the hands of men who have been rendered brutal, and torpid, and ferocious, by ages of slavery. . . . I allow Major Cartwright's arguments to be unanswerable; abstractedly it is the right of every human being to have a share in the Government. But Mr. Paine's arguments are also unanswerable; a pure republic may be shown . . . to be that system of social order, the fittest to produce the happiness and promote the genuine eminence of man. Yet nothing can less consist with reason, or afford smaller hopes of any beneficial issue, than the plan which should abolish the regal and the aristocratical branches of our constitution, before the public mind, through many gradations of improvement, shall have arrived at the maturity which can disregard these symbols of its childhood.

The moderate reform desired by Shelley was accomplished, more than half a century later, by Mr. Gladstone.

On Nov. 6th, 1817, occurred the premature death of the young Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV. and Caroline of Brunswick, the idol of the English people. Suddenly snatched from domestic joys that had consoled her for an unhappy childhood, the "fair and innocent princess" carried with her to the grave the lamentations of all England.

Shelley was shocked at the national mourning for a woman, who, although interesting from her

misfortunes and her premature death, was yet chiefly so as a Princess and future Queen of England. In grief so solemn and ostentatious he detected signs of servility and baseness, and "the Hermit of Marlow" wrote an "Address to the People" with the following motto: "We pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird."

The dying bird thus forgotten by the English people in their pity for its bright plumage, represented the common and hidden miseries of suffering humanity, the sorrows of the people, of which poor Charlotte's destiny formed a very small part.

Shelley understands the public mourning of the Athenians for the death of those whose valour, intelligence, or genius had illumined the Republic; he would have thought it well that, when Milton died, "the universal English nation had been clothed in solemn black," that "the French nation should have enjoined a public mourning at the death of Rousseau and Voltaire." "It were well done also," he says, "that men should mourn for any public calamity which has befallen their country or the world, though it be not death. This helps to maintain that connection between one man and another, and all men considered as a whole, which is the bond of social life. There should be public mourning when those events take place which make all good men mourn in their hearts—the rule of foreign or domestic tyrants, the abuse of public faith, the wresting of old and venerable laws to the murder of the innocent, the established insecurity of all those . . . who cherish an unconquerable enthusiasm for public good. . . When the French Republic was extinguished the world ought to have mourned." In an eloquent parallel he compares the death of the young, amiable, and interesting Princess, "the last and the best of her race," with that of the three men

who were executed for political offences on the same day—Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner—whose frightful deaths by hanging and decapitation constitute a calamity that the English nation should lament with inconsolable grief.* He ends with an eloquent peroration which we must quote in its entirety :

Mourn then, People of England ! Clothe yourselves in solemn black. Let the bells be tolled. Think of mortality and change. Shroud yourselves in solitude and the gloom of sacred sorrow. Spare no symbol of universal grief. Weep—mourn—lament. Fill the great City—fill the boundless fields with lamentation and the echo of groans. A beautiful Princess is dead—she who should have been the Queen of her beloved nation, and whose posterity should have ruled it for ever. She loved the domestic affections, and cherished arts which adorn, and valour which defends. She was amiable, and would have become wise, but she was young, and in the flower of youth the despoiler came. LIBERTY is dead ! Slave ! I charge thee, disturb not the depth and solemnity of our grief by any meaner sorrow. If one has died who was like her that should have ruled over this land, like Liberty, young, innocent, and lovely, know that the power through which that one perished was God, and that it was a private grief. But *man* has murdered Liberty ; and whilst the life was ebbing from its wound, there descended on the heads and on the hearts of every human thing the sympathy of an universal blast and curse. Fetters heavier than iron weigh upon us, because they bind our souls. We move about in a dungeon more pestilential than damp and narrow walls, because the earth is its floor and the heavens are its roof. Let us follow the corpse of British Liberty slowly and reverentially to its tomb ; and if some glorious Phantom should appear, and make its throne of broken swords and sceptres and royal crowns trampled in the dust, let us say that the Spirit of Liberty has arisen from its grave, and left all that was gross and mortal there, and kneel down to worship it as our Queen.

The foregoing lines became subsequently the theme of Shelley's version of "God save the King"—God save Liberty !

* Shelley lifts up his voice in strong reprobation of the penalty of death : "Nothing is more horrible than that man should for any cause take the life of man."

CHAPTER XV.

SHELLEY IN ITALY—MILAN, LEGHORN, LUCCA, VENICE, THE CAPUCHINS, FLORENCE, AND PADUA — “ROSALIND AND HELEN,” AND “JULIAN AND MADDALO”—1818.

EARLY in February, 1818, Shelley, who was impatient to get into a milder climate, on account of the increasing delicacy of his health, bade adieu to Marlow. It was with profound regret that he left the scenes associated with the intellectual pleasure which he had enjoyed in the composition of “*Laon and Cythna*.”

On the 9th March, William Shelley, Clara Everina Shelley (born on the 3rd September, 1817, at Marlow), and Clara Allegra, Byron’s daughter, were duly baptized at St. Giles’s-in-the-Fields, and on the 11th Shelley took his last look at the shores of England.

A new life was about to begin for him under the sunny sky of Italy, “that paradise of exiles and pariahs,” as he calls it. His genius, freed from all enmities and resentments, was about to soar boldly into the serene spheres of the purely ideal. On losing sight of England, Shelley seemed to lose sight of earth altogether; by daily contact with the masterpieces of Italian

Art and Nature his taste was refined, his conceptions were elevated and purified; he became invested with the beauty and grandeur of the antique, through his absorbed contemplation of its ruins, his assiduous study of sculpture, his researches into Plato and Æschylus, in short, his loving worship of all the arts. His faculties expanded, together with his senses and his frame, under these favourable physical conditions; and to this epoch we owe the incomparable poet of the "Prometheus," the "Epipsychidion," the "Adonais," and the "Hellas."

We have the history of this transformation, this full bloom of his poetic genius, in his "Letters from Italy." These letters are held by the best judges to occupy an exceptional place in the epistolary literature of the century. If they do not possess the brilliancy, the humour, the petulance, and the wonderful "go" of Byron's letters, they possess greater solidity and seriousness, a deeper passion, a more sincere enthusiasm, and absolute frankness of thought and feeling. Mr. Garnett has justly remarked that Shelley's letters represent exactly the way in which the poet, as a poet, contemplates life and Nature. A great deal of the pleasure which they produce proceeds from their close agreement with the poetical works upon which they are the involuntary commentary. They prove that the ideal world of Shelley was to him a real world, and that the habitual level of the life of the man was not lower than that of the poet.

On the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley embarked on the *Lady Castlereagh* for Calais. He was accompanied by his wife, Miss Clairmont, Elise (the Swiss girl), Milly (a young maid-servant from Marlow), his own two children, and the little Allegra, who was only fourteen months old. He hoped to bring about a reconciliation

between Byron and the mother, through the medium of this child. The party travelled through France by way of Calais, Rheims, Langres, Dijon, and Lyons, Shelley reading aloud Schlegel's work, and a new poem by Hunt, called "Foliage."

On the 26th of March, Shelley crossed the Pass of the Échelles, and entered the valleys of the Alps. The winding road, cut in the rock on the face of the mountain, which leads to Chambéry, produced a vivid impression upon him. He declares that the site resembles that described in the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, and proceeds to draw an exquisite word-picture of it. But although the poet, whose mind is already full of his "Prometheus," seeks for images in proportion with his subject amid the grand natural scenery of the Alpine ranges, the humanitarian philosopher is moved to the deepest pity by the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants of those fertile valleys. Shelley remarks continually upon this contrast between man and Nature while he journeys into Italy, and he is disposed to exaggerate it ingenuously, in order to stigmatise the tyranny of Governments, which he regards as its sole true cause, with greater truth and liberty. These melancholy impressions are, however, speedily dispelled by the charms of Alpine Nature; while the carriages are climbing the ascent of Mont Cenis, Shelley becomes intoxicated with delight, he sings as he goes. While descending the Alps, his chest expands, his sensations become more acute and vivid under the influence of the beauty of the country and the serenity of the sky; he feels more keenly than ever that he depends upon these things for life. With what delight he hears for the first time at Susa a pretty Italian woman speaking "the clear, the perfect language

of Italy, after the nasal, clipped cacophony of the French"! The first objects which he meets in that favoured land delight and enchant him; those objects are, firstly, the Arch of Augustus at Susa, which is like the gate of Italy; and a fair woman whose graceful mien and blonde beauty recalled Fuseli's Eve.

Shelley arrived at Milan on the 4th of April, and remained there for a month. He was particularly struck by two things, the Duomo and the Opera. But the lake of Como had a far greater attraction for the poet. The beauty of its shores, and its lovely villas, Tanzi, Tremezzina, Sommariva, Pliniana, is, according to him, to be surpassed only by that of the Lakes of Killarney. He would have liked to settle down permanently in one of those enchanting places, Pliniana, a half-ruined villa, with great laurel hedges, overlooking the finest landscape in the world. He had, however, to relinquish his own wishes in deference to those of Mary, who did not relish "that divine solitude of Como" so keenly as he did, and he bent his steps towards Pisa, being attracted thither by the vicinity of the sea.

He left Milan with great regret and crossed the Apennines, which he considered much less beautiful than the Alps: "An immense and indeterminate scene, in which the imagination cannot find a shelter." On the other hand, the plains of Parma had the aspect of a garden in his eyes. He remained only three or four days at Pisa, "a large and disagreeable town almost without inhabitants," and arrived on the 10th of May at Leghorn, where he was detained a full month by the pleasure which he derived from the society of the Gisbornes, new friends to whom he was introduced by Godwin. Mrs. Gisborne, who from her childhood had led an adventurous life,

was peculiarly calculated to attract and fascinate Shelley. She was the daughter of an English merchant settled at Constantinople, and, at the age of eight years, she was separated from her mother. Her father brought her up with the greatest care in the free society of the English merchants and diplomatists. In 1785, Jeremy Bentham, then visiting the Bosphorus, had remarked the young girl, who, at fifteen, was quite womanly, and exhibited extraordinary capacity for the arts. He played Eichner's sonatas for the piano and the violin with her. Shortly afterwards we find her at Rome with her father, taking lessons in painting from Angelica Kaufmann. The English painter, Barry, was so much struck by some of her sketches that he strongly urged her to devote herself exclusively to painting. At Rome she married Mr. William Reveley, an architect, who brought her to London, where she formed a social alliance with all the advanced intellects of the time—for she fully shared the Liberal convictions of her husband—and placed herself under the philosophic guidance of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. When Mary was born she took her to her own house, and tended her with maternal solicitude. She became a widow early, and, having refused Godwin, she married Mr. John Gisborne in 1800, and retired to Italy with her new husband and her son by her first marriage. Mr. Gisborne gave his wife's son a sound scientific education. When Shelley found the Gisborne family installed at Leghorn, Henry Reveley was an engineer of great promise, with a pronounced taste for mechanics and the new applications of science.

The story of Maria Gisborne, her relations with Mary Wollstonecraft, her beauty, her character, and, above all, her freedom from religious or social prejudices, could not fail to captivate

the inflammable soul of the poet. As for the husband, he was an excellent man—placidity itself—with but little capacity for business, in which he had never succeeded; erudite, well-read, not without interest in poetry in general, and enthusiastic about Calderon. He had initiated his wife into the beauties of the *Magico Prodigioso* and the *Autos*, and in their school Shelley learned to love that other Shakespeare whom he had met more than once unconsciously, and who was thenceforth to share the poet's devotion to the author of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

These agreeable relations, which speedily developed into a warm and close friendship, diverted Shelley's thoughts from the unpleasantness of that great commercial town, which is the most untaught and unattractive of the Italian cities, and he bade farewell with sincere regret to the accomplished woman who was destined to inspire one of his most original poems, a masterpiece of humour and grace, the "Letter to Maria Gisborne." At the Baths of Lucca, where there were English people only, Shelley was free to give himself up entirely to his studious tastes and the carrying out of his poetic plans. He rejoiced in being restored to silence, and that chosen society of all the ages, his books, which he had carefully packed before leaving England, and found again at Lucca, and in his picturesque walks in the chestnut woods, on the banks of the river, or across the mountains. His dwelling was a restored and repainted cottage in the midst of grand scenery, surrounded by wooded mountains, surmounted here and there by the bare crest of some far-distant Apennine. The house stood in a little garden, with a laurel grove at the end of it so thick that the sun could not pierce it with his rays. The poet's happy days at Lucca were passed in

walks with Mary in the neighbourhood, long excursions on horseback to the *Prato fiorito*, a field of flowers on the summit of one of the Apennines, or to the sanctuary of the *Monte Pelevino*, the loftiest of those mountains; attentive observation of the slightest perturbations of the atmosphere, which he studied in order to paint it; contemplation of the beautiful Italian evenings; study of the great Italian poets, Ariosto, Petrarch, and Tasso; and in reading and translating Plato.

The admirable translation of the "Banquet of Plato," which dates from this epoch, was the work of ten mornings. Although this translation seemed to him very insufficient to convey in English the inimitable graces of the original, it may safely be affirmed that, not since the Renaissance, has Plato found so enthusiastic an interpreter, one so apt to comprehend and to embody all the charm and poetry of his language. Mrs. Shelley is justified in her claim for this translation, that it presents the great Athenian to English readers in a style worthy of him.

In translating Plato's "Banquet," Shelley also purposed to give Mary an idea of the sentiments and manners (*mœurs*) of the Athenians. With this object he began an essay which was to form a preface to his translation, upon the literature, the arts, and the manners of the Athenians. We have only a fragment of this essay, entitled, "A Discourse upon the Manners of the Ancients in relation to the subject of Love." Shelley's mind was deeply impressed with the unrivalled grandeur of that unique epoch in the history of the human mind; and as he held that no person had hitherto depicted the life of the ancient Greeks with exactitude and fidelity, he designed to supply the deficiency. To do this it was necessary, in his belief, to divest himself of all modern prejudices and considerations, to become altogether pagan,

entirely Greek. In his praiseworthy work, "*Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis*," the Abbé Barthélemy commits the fault of never forgetting that he is a Christian and a Frenchman; and although Wieland makes a tolerable pagan, he still has too much political prejudice. He is too much afraid of diminishing the interest of his recital by depicting sentiments with which a modern European could not sympathise. All books written upon the Greeks seemed to Shelley to have been written for children, and on principles of timid prudery incompatible with truth.

To begin the work by an explanation of the Greek ideas upon the subject of love, was to take the bull by the horns, and no one could realise more fully than Shelley the conditions imposed upon any writer who should try to restore to life the true traditions of Greek antiquity upon this obscure and delicate subject. It is deeply to be regretted that he did no more than sketch the outline of the picture, perhaps because he was deterred by the very delicacy of the subject; but, such as it is, his sketch is rich in fruitful ideas and original views. No more just idea of the position of woman in ancient times, and the causes of her inferiority and degradation, could be given. While doing justice to the progress in the relations of the two sexes accomplished by Christianity and Chivalry, Shelley objected with justice to the exaggeration of the merit of that revolution, and would not admit the pretension that the Greeks knew nothing of sentimental or ideal love, and the claim of that passion to be the exclusive product of Christian or chivalrous ideas.

Amid the charms of solitude, and the calm of his mind, which was refreshed by the living spring of Nature and Plato, Shelley once more found inspiration. In the middle of August

(1818), upon the entreaty of Mary, he finished his poem of "Rosalind and Helen,"* which he had begun at Marlow, one of those rare works in which Shelley, coming down from his dreamy heights, touches ordinary life, and consents to depict purely human passions.

"Rosalind and Helen" possessed a special interest for Mary. It is easy for any reader who has even a superficial knowledge of Shelley's history to discover Claire and Mary, separated for awhile, and at enmity, under the names of Rosalind and Helen, and to find Shelley himself in Lionel. He wrote this narrative in the hopes of cementing the friendship of the two young women who were now reunited under his roof, and, in fact, from thenceforth (1818) their mutual attachment was undisturbed.

On the 17th of August Shelley went to Venice, accompanied by Claire, to visit Lord Byron. The poor mother hoped that Shelley would procure permission for her to see her daughter again. At Padua Shelley took a gondola, and, by a strange chance, he selected a gondolier who had formerly been in Byron's service. This man talked incessantly of the *Giovanotto Inglese*, who bore an outlandish name, lived sumptuously, and spent money lavishly. Venice was reached at midnight, and the gondola sustained a tempest of wind, rain, and lightning in the lagoon.

On the day after his arrival, Shelley, leaving Claire with the Hoppners,† went to Byron's dwelling. The conversation between the friends soon turned upon the delicate matter that Shelley

* "Rosalind and Helen" was published by Ollier in the spring of 1819, together with "Verses written in the Euganean Mountains," the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and the sonnet "Ozymandias."

† Mr. Hoppner was British Consul at Venice, and Mrs. Hoppner had taken charge of the little Allegra.

had so much at heart, and the latter believed that he had gained some points. Byron seemed even disposed to give up the child to her mother. Their interview, which was full of kindness and good-humour, was prolonged by an excursion in a gondola, and the two poets indulged in the latter diversion several times during Shelley's stay at Venice. To that sojourn we owe the poem of "Julian and Maddalo," so eloquently eulogised by Mr. Rossetti, who declares that it alone would suffice to justify the poet's deathless fame, and holds that, together with the "Prometheus" and "The Cenci," it completes the supreme trinity of Shelley's genius.

The reader will easily recognise the two friends under the names of Julian and Maddalo. It would be difficult to depict two such different natures better than Shelley depicts them in his preface, and to tell the whole truth with greater tact and delicacy. In his letters to his friends he is sharper and more caustic; it is in them that we must seek for his real views of the genius and the character of the author of "Don Juan."

Byron, who was anxious to have Shelley near him, offered him the use of his villa, called dei Cappucini, near Este. Shelley accepted this proposal, and pressed his wife to join him there. During his absence he had been very anxious about her, and had written several letters to her, full of the tenderness of his loving heart, and of truly paternal solicitude. He had also addressed some pretty verses to her. His instructions for the journey, which she was to make under the guidance of the accomplished Paolo, were of the most minute and thoughtful kind.

Mary, who was longing to rejoin her husband came with all haste to Este. The Villa dei Cappucini, an ancient residence of the Medici,

was situated in the neighbourhood of that city, on the summit of a little hill surrounded by several loftier ones. The house was pleasant and commodious; a wall enclosed between trellised vines, or *Pergola*, as the Italians call it, led from the house to the bottom of the garden, where there was a summer-house. This was used by Shelley as his study, and there he wrote "*Julian and Maddalo*," and began the "*Prometheus*." The praises of the villa, the views from it, and the great plain of Lombardy which stretched below, are sung in many of the poet's letters of this peaceful epoch.

A melancholy event darkened the fair days of the Villa dei Cappucini; this was the death of the little Clara, who had been taken ill with dysentery during the journey. The child was taken from Este to Venice for medical advice, but she died almost immediately upon arriving there, and the sorrowing parents returned to mourn her in their saddened home.

To Shelley, beautiful Venice, with "its silent streets paved with water," was a bitter and lugubrious spectacle. He saw nothing there save the dungeons, the *piombi*, and the *oubliettes*, a city enslaved from the day on which the rights of the people had been usurped, but more degraded still since its subjection to the Austrian yoke. "I had no idea," he writes, "of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless debauchery, and all the unspeakable brutalities which degrade human nature, may be carried, until I had seen Venice!"

No traveller in Italy has felt the misfortune of that fair land become the prey of the foreigner, so keenly as Shelley; no poet has so bitterly deplored the shame and misery of her servitude, or sung so nobly her hopes of a national resurrection; none has associated himself so en-

thusiastically with her every attempt to accomplish her freedom.

Petrarch's house and tomb, sacredly preserved at Arqua, attracted him to the Euganean Mountains, but the deeper feeling for liberty mingles with that for Nature, in the emotions of the disciple of Laura's lover, when he contemplates Padua, "where the lamp of learning burns no longer, or is only a mocking meteor." In the ruins of Florence, he beholds the chastisement of an inexpiable crime, the attempt against the liberty of Pisa, and, on rising from the perusal of Sismondi's "Italian Republics," he utters in song the heroic legend of Marengi, who avenged his banishment from Florence by burning a Pisan ship.

Winter was approaching, and Shelley left the Villa dei Cappucini on the 5th November, 1818, for the South of Italy. After two days' journey by very bad roads, he arrived at Ferrara, and recorded his admiration of the "true country of Pasiphaë," through which he had passed. He afterwards remembered the little white oxen of the plain of Ferrara, when he wrote his satirical drama *Ædipus*, in which he places the English Royal Pasiphaë upon the stage. Ferrara, at the time of Shelley's visit, was no longer the adventurous city of Ariosto; but, although deserted and melancholy, it had still preserved an air of grandeur and magnificence, something fanciful, too, which recalled its poetic memories. Shelley visited the Cathedral, but was driven from it by the importunity of the beggars, before he had time to discover whether the fresco of the Last Judgment is a copy or an original by Michael Angelo;* and the famous Public Library, containing 160,000 volumes, and immensely rich in manuscripts and miniatures, "whose colours

* A superb inspiration of Bastianino after Michael Angelo.

are as fresh as though they dated from yesterday." The great attraction of Ferrara for Shelley lay in the recollections of his brother poets, Ariosto and Tasso. He pauses in deeply-moved contemplation before the tomb of Ariosto, in one of the great halls of the Library, surmounted by an expressive bust of the poet, or before his arm-chair, a common piece of furniture enough in walnut-wood, picturing to himself Ariosto still sitting there, the open book of "*Satires*" close at hand, and the old inkstand aiding the living poet's fancy. But nothing interests him so deeply as the autograph manuscripts of the two poets; the *Satires* of Ariosto, and a manuscript of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, also some sonnets of Tasso's to his persecutor. Shelley's mind, always in quest of some manifestation beyond the present and tangible object, seeks to divine the symbol of their soul and their genius in these mute characters, subjecting them to close examination and analysis. He peruses those sonnets which Tasso wrote in his prison—they are in praise of his tormentor, and, moved by profound pity for the weakness of the noble victim, he comprehends and pardons. Shelley does not fail to visit the Hospital of Saint Anne, in which is the prison "which for seven years and three months shut out that glorious being from the air and the light, where those poetic influences which he has communicated to thousands of readers, were nurtured." In its darkest corner he saw the mark of the chains, fastened to the wall, by which his hands and feet were bound. There, in his mind's eye, he beheld the unfortunate poet; his eyes fixed upon the barred window, following with his despairing gaze the beloved shadow of Leonora, towards the tower of the palace, which is to be seen in the distance. He piously detaches a morsel of the wood of the real door of this dark and baneful

prison, to be sent to his friend Peacock. Not an instant's doubt has Shelley of the authenticity of the hateful place; he is not a critical and sceptical traveller like Goethe, who saw nothing in Tasso's prison but an ordinary coal-cellar, in which he was assuredly never incarcerated, and quotes on the occasion Luther's famous inkstain, which is renewed from time to time, for the satisfaction of credulous tourists.

From Ferrara, Shelley proceeded to Bologna, where he arrived on the 8th November. Here, Shelley ventured on the yet untrodden ground of art-criticism. Until the period of his travels in Italy, he had been indifferent to the Fine Arts, with the exception of Sculpture; but his mind was too ardently fixed upon the search after the Beautiful, to admit of his neglecting to pursue it under all its forms. The Italian Museums had awakened in him that insatiable curiosity which made him observe in painting as well as in statuary, "the laws according to which that ideal beauty, of which we have in ourselves a perception so intense and yet so obscure, is realised in outward forms." He was not an amateur by profession; he was not a learned connoisseur; but he possessed what is worth more than erudition and technical knowledge, that is to say, natural taste and love of the beautiful, which is its principle and its rule. He felt strongly and keenly, and he expressed ardently what he felt; in his descriptions of pictures there is freshness and grace of sentiment, sincerity and truth of impressions, which render marvellously the effect of the work, and place it, so to speak, before our eyes. In the tone, the keenness, and the originality of his criticisms, he approaches the great master of this kind of writing, our own Diderot.

The two painters who strike him most in that

wonderful Bologna gallery, are Correggio and Guido. He admires a picture representing "Four Saints," by the former, "of exquisite execution," and especially a "Beatified Christ, of inexpressible beauty," which gives him the highest idea of the painter's genius. Above all, he admires the vaporous and fluid light with which each seems to be penetrated. Like Goethe, he is enamoured of the divine genius of Guido, "who ought never to have painted," he says, "anything but that which is most perfect to behold, instead of those dreadfully stupid subjects which no amount of abuse can sufficiently stigmatise. On this point Shelley thinks with Goethe, and would willingly have endorsed the saying of the great German pagan: "Faith has resuscitated the arts, Superstition has laid hold on them and killed them afresh." His favourites among the masterpieces of Italian Art are heathen or allegorical subjects. He remembers with delight Guido's "Rape of Proserpine," "in which Proserpine casts a languishing, half-resigned look upon the flowers which she leaves behind her in the fields of Enna." He endeavours to convey this tender impression in verse. Guido's "Victorious Samson" has, to his mind, something of "the strength and elegance" of the Apollo; the picture of "Fortune" he regards as "a work of true beauty." He also admires the "Massacre of the Innocents" and "The Dying Christ," but the first of these pictures strikes him as a feeble rendering of so horrible a subject; and apropos of the second, although "very fine," he says: "One grows tired, whatever may be the conception and the execution of the subject, of seeing that agonised and monotonous figure eternally stereotyped in a prescribed attitude of torture." He experiences a similar feeling on contemplating Guercino's "St. Bruno," which represents to him the sublime of mystical horror. He

could not admire the mannered and forced method of Guercino.

Amid all these masterpieces, Raffaello's "Saint Cecilia" delighted Shelley most :

You forget that it is a picture as you look at it ; and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived and executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is a unity and a perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure, St. Cecilia, seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the poet's mind ; her deep, dark, eloquent eyes lifted up ; her chestnut hair flung back from her forehead—she holds an organ in her hands—her countenance as it were calmed by the depth of its passion and rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of heaven, and, as I imagine, has just ceased to sing, for the four figures that surround her evidently point, by their attitudes, towards her ; particularly St. John, who with a tender yet impassioned gesture, bends his countenance towards her, languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie various instruments of music, broken and unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak ; it eclipses Nature, yet it has all her charm and softness.

Remembering Shelley's extreme admiration of the grace and charm of Raffaello, Correggio, and Guido, we cannot feel surprise at his verdict on the grand, masculine, and severe style of Michael Angelo, which he criticises, with reference to his "Last Judgment," and estimates the painter as the "Titus Andronicus" of his art :

With respect to Michael Angelo, I dissent, and think with astonishment and indignation on the common notion that he equals, and in some respects exceeds Raffaello. He seems to me to have no sense of moral dignity and loveliness ; and the energy for which he has been so much praised, appears to me to be a certain rude, external, mechanical quality, in comparison with anything possessed by Raffaello, or even much inferior artists. His famous painting in the Sixtine Chapel seems to me deficient in beauty and majesty, both in the conception and the execution.

He has been called the Dante of painting ; but if we find some of the gross and strong outlines which are employed in the most distasteful passages of the "Inferno," where shall we find *your* Francesca—where the spirit coming over the sea in a boat, like Mars rising from the vapours of the horizon—where Matilda gathering flowers, and all the exquisite tenderness, and sensibility, and ideal beauty, in which Dante excelled all poets except Shakespeare ?

Shelley applied his axiom, *sweet and strong*, to Art. To Shelley, Michael Angelo seemed the type of strength or horror untempered by beauty ; he only conceived strength either in contrast or in union with grace, as in Leonardo da Vinci's "Medusa," which inspired his beautiful lines beginning : "Her horror and her beauty are divine. . . ." There is one passage in a curious pamphlet by Shelley on the Devil, wherein he tries to account for his marked preference for painters and poets who have devoted themselves to Beauty rather than to Horror, to Grace rather than to Strength :

Misery and injustice contrive to produce very poetical effects, because the excellence of poetry consists in its awakening the sympathy of men, which among persons influenced by an abject and gloomy superstition, is much more easily done by images of horror than of beauty. It often requires a higher degree of skill in a poet to make beauty, virtue, and harmony poetical, that is, to give them an idealised and rhythmical analogy with the predominating emotions of his readers—than to make injustice, deformity, and discord poetical. There are fewer Raffaelles than Michael Angelos ; better verses have been written on Hell than Paradise. How few read the "Purgatorio" or the "Paradiso" of Dante, in comparison of those who know the "Inferno" well ! *

Moreover, Michael Angelo did not appear to him to realise equally with Raffaele the ideal of

* "On the Devil and Devils," a very amusing essay written in the Lucianic manner, in which Shelley criticises the conflicting opinions on the nature of the Devil, his attributes, and his place of abode.

Greek beauty, which is Shelley's standard for all the conceptions of Art. The thought of the vanished paintings of Greece, of the mutilations suffered by the masterpieces of modern painters, either from the Vandalism of "restoration" or French bayonets, moves him to gloomy reflections on the fragility and mortality of that fugitive art.

Sculpture retains its freshness for twenty centuries—the Apollo and the Venus are as they were. But books are perhaps the only productions of man coeval with the human race. Sophocles and Shakespeare can be produced and reproduced for ever. But the paintings of Zeuxis and Apelles are no more, and perhaps they bore the same relation to Homer and Æschylus, that those of Guido and Raffaele bear to Dante and Petrarch.

From Bologna, Shelley travels slowly to Rome, by way of Rimini, Fano, Foligno, and the Via Flaminia. He follows the course of the Metaurus, the banks of which were the scene of the defeat of Asdrúbal, and perceives with astonishment that the sides of the mountain through which the road is carried, yet bear marks of the chisels of the legionaries of Rome. At the romantically situated town of Spoleto, he is full of admiration for a colossal aqueduct, and a castle built by Belisarius or Narses; at Terni, the celebrated cataract of Velino appears to him, after the glaciers of Montanvert and the source of the Arveiron, one of the grandest spectacles in the world. At length he reaches the famous Campagna di Roma; he sees the Apennines on the one hand, on the other St. Peter's and Rome; "Rome, the capital of a vanished world!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SHELLEY IN ITALY—ROME AND NAPLES— 1818-1819.

SHELLEY reached Rome on November 20th, 1818; on that occasion he did little more than glance at the Eternal City, but even the superficial inspection of the miracles of ancient Art produced on him an impression that exceeded, he says, anything he had ever experienced in his travels. He saw little of modern Rome, visiting by preference the ruins of the Coliseum, which appeared to him as sublime and as impressive in its present state, as when it was encrusted with Dorian marble, and ornamented with columns of Egyptian granite; and the Arch of Titus, or rather of Constantine, "the Christian reptile, who had crawled through the blood of his murdered family to the supreme power." He wandered in the desert of the ruins of the Forum, strewn with the wrecks of temples which a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind; he rested with pleasure on the green slope of earth beneath the pyramidal tomb of Cestius which is known as the English burial-place, and where his own ashes were soon to rest.

"It is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld," he writes, as though with a presentiment. "To see the sun shining on its bright grass—fresh when we

first visited, with the autumnal dews—and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind ; and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion.”

He was deeply impressed by the sight of the Coliseum, and here, while Mary sketched the ruined stairs, and little William sported beside her, he began that historical and philosophical romance of which the Coliseum was to be the subject and the title.*

After a week given to the delights of Rome, Shelley set out for Naples, where he purposed passing the beginning of the winter. The frantic terrors of a Lombard merchant and a Calabrian priest, supplied the comedy of the journey. They were in mortal fear of being assassinated when travelling, before daylight, through the Pontine Marshes, and trembled at the pistol and the intrepidity of the poet. The first incident he witnessed on arriving at Naples was an assassination, but the beauties of Nature, and the glorious marvels of Art, soon enabled him to forget the hideousness and degradation of man.

He writes to Peacock (December 22nd) :

We have a lodging divided from the sea by the royal gardens, and from our windows we see perpetually the blue waters of the bay for ever changing, yet for ever the same, and encompassed by the mountainous island of Capri, the lofty peaks which overhang Salerno, and the woody hill of Posilipo, whose promontories hide from us Misenum, and the lofty isle of Inarime (Ischia), which, with its divided summit, forms the opposite horn of the bay. From the pleasant walks of the garden we see Vesuvius ; a smoke by day and a fire by night is seen upon its summit, and the glassy sea often reflects its light

* A remarkable fragment of this tale, in which Shelley draws his own portrait, has been published by Mr. Forman.

or shadow. The climate is delicious. We sit without a fire with the windows open, and have almost all the productions of an English summer. The weather is usually like what Wordsworth calls "the first fine day of March," sometimes very much warmer, though perhaps it wants that "each minute sweeter than before," which gives an intoxicating sweetness to the awakening of the earth from its winter's sleep in England.

Instead of guide-books, they read "Corinne," Titus Livius, and Winckelmann.

The first excursions were to Baiæ and Vesuvius. On December 8th, Shelley visited with lively emotion those classic spots called by Virgil *Puteolana et Cumana regna*: Posilipo; the Bay of Pozzuoli, with its lofty rocks and craggy islets, its arches and portals of precipice, and its enormous caverns, which echoed faintly with the murmur of the languid tide; the Mare Morto; the Avernus and cavern of the Sibyl; in fact, all the scenery of the sixth book of the "Æneid." He was, however, somewhat disappointed to see how these places had fallen from their mythological and Virgilian beauty; the Elysian Fields having become a vineyard, the Avernus having lost its deadly and pestilential vapours, and the miserly Acheron, under the name of Fusaro, being now employed for soaking flax, and forming an excellent oyster-bed. The land is covered with tombs and ruins, the whole attraction of the scenery being due to the effect of sea and sky; "the colours of the water and the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty." Nevertheless, he admires the cavern of the Sibyl (not Virgil's Sibyl) on Lake Avernus, the ruins of the temple of Pluto, which are reflected in the windless mirror of a lovely basin of water, surrounded by dark and profoundly solitary hills; and the broken columns of a temple to Serapis at Pozzuoli.

Vesuvius is, next to the glaciers, the most imposing exhibition of the energies of Nature that

Shelley had seen. We must quote his exquisite description, which is worthy of a place beside those of Goethe and Châteaubriand :

It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers, but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength. From Resina to the hermitage you wind up the mountain, and cross a vast stream of hardened lava, which is an actual image of the waves of the sea, changed into hard black stone by enchantment. The lines of the boiling flood seem to hang in the air, and it is difficult to believe that the billows which seem hurrying down upon you are not actually in motion. This plain was once a sea of liquid fire. From the hermitage we crossed another vast stream of lava, and then went on foot up the cone—this is the only part of the ascent in which there is any difficulty, and that difficulty has been much exaggerated. It is composed of rocks of lava, and declivities of ashes ; by ascending the former and descending the latter, there is very little fatigue. On the summit is a kind of irregular plain, the most horrible chaos that can be imagined, riven into ghastly chasms, and heaped up with tumuli of great stones and cinders, and enormous rocks blackened and calcined, which had been thrown from the volcano upon one another in terrible confusion. In the midst stands the conical hill from which volumes of smoke and the fountains of liquid fire are rolled forth for ever. The mountain is at present in a slight state of eruption ; and a thick, heavy white smoke is perpetually rolled out, interrupted by enormous columns of an impenetrable black bituminous vapour, which is hurled up, fold after fold, into the sky with a deep hollow sound, and fiery stones are rained down from its blackness, and a black shower of ashes fell even where we sat. The lava, like the glacier, creeps on perpetually, with a crackling sound as of suppressed fire. There are several springs of lava ; and in one place it gushes precipitously over a high crag, rolling down the half-molten rocks, and its own overhanging waves ; a cataract of quivering fire. We approached the extremity of one of the rivers of lava ; it is about twenty feet in breadth and ten in height ; and as the inclined plane was not rapid, its motion was very slow. We saw the masses of its dark exterior surface detach themselves as it moved, and betray the depth of the liquid flame. In the day the fire is but slightly seen ; you only observe a tremulous motion in the air, and streams and fountains of white sulphurous smoke.

At length we saw the sun sink between Capreæ and Inarime, and, as the darkness increased, the effect of the fire became more beautiful. We were, as it were, surrounded by streams and cataracts of the red and radiant fire ; and in the midst, from the column of bituminous smoke shot up into the air, fell the vast masses of rock, white with the light of their intense heat, leaving behind them, through the dark vapour, trains of splendour. We descended by torchlight, and I should have enjoyed the scenery on my return, but they conducted me, I know not how, to the hermitage in a state of intense bodily suffering, the worst effect of which was spoiling the pleasure of Mary and Claire. Our guides on the occasion were complete savages. You have no idea of the horrible cries which they suddenly utter, no one knows why ; the clamour, the vociferation, the tumult. Claire, in her palanquin, suffered most from it ; and when I had gone on before, they threatened to leave her in the middle of the road, which they would have done had not my Italian servant promised them a beating, after which they became quiet. Nothing, however, can be more picturesque than the gestures and the physiognomies of these savage people. And when, in the darkness of night, they unexpectedly begin to sing in chorus some fragments of their wild but sweet national music, the effect is exceedingly fine.

In the intervals between these excursions Shelley visited the museums of Naples, more particularly the sculpture galleries, for the collection of paintings, says he, "is sufficiently miserable,"* but : "Such statues ! There is a Venus,† an ideal shape of the most winning loveliness ; a Bacchus more sublime than any living being ; ‡ a Satyr, making love to a youth, in which the living expression of the sculpture, and the inconceivable beauty of the form of the youth, overcome one's repugnance to the subject."

* Shelley excepted from this censure the original studies by Michael Angelo of the "Day of Judgment," a few pictures by Raffaele and his pupils, a "Danaë" of Titian's, a "Maddelena" by Guido, and some excellent pictures, in point of execution, by Annibale Caracci ; "none others," says he, "worth a second look."

† Most likely the Venus of Capua, attributed to Praxiteles, and the original, it is said, of the Venus of Milo.

‡ Probably the Hermaphrodite Bacchus.

We can easily imagine how deep an impression on Shelley the ruins of Pompeii must have produced ; he was astonished, having no conception that anything so perfect could yet remain. From the contemplation of its tombs, its stones, and its paintings, his mind turned to the consideration of the human life which once animated this desert of ruins ; by the aid of its monuments he reconstructs the spirit and the soul of the ancient city. He writes :

The houses have only one storey, and the apartments though not large, are very lofty. A great advantage results from this, wholly unknown in our cities. The public buildings, whose ruins are now forests, as it were, of white fluted columns, and which then supported entablatures loaded with sculptures, were then seen on all sides over the roofs of the houses. This was the excellence of the ancients. Their private expenses were comparatively moderate ; the dwelling of one of the chief senators of Pompeii is elegant indeed, and adorned with most beautiful specimens of Art, but small. But their public buildings are everywhere marked by the bold and grand designs of an unsparing magnificence. In the little town of Pompeii (it contained about twenty thousand inhabitants) it is wonderful to see the number and the grandeur of their public buildings. Another advantage, too, is that in the present case the glorious scenery around is not shut out, and that, unlike the inhabitants of the Cimmerian ravines of modern cities, the ancient Pompeians could contemplate the clouds and the lamps of Heaven ; could see the moon rise high behind Vesuvius, and the sun set in the sea, tremulous with an atmosphere of golden vapour, between Inarime and Misenum. . . .

At the upper end, supported on an elevated platform, stands the Temple of Jupiter. Under the colonnade of its portico we sate, and pulled out our oranges, and figs, and bread, and medlars ("sorry fare," you will say), and rested to eat. Here was a magnificent spectacle. Above and between the multitudinous shafts of the sun-shining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark, lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island ; to the right were Capræ, Inarime, Prochyta (Procida), and Misenum. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth

volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames with the sullen and tremendous sound. This scene was what the Greeks beheld (Pompeii was, you know, a Greek city). They lived in harmony with Nature, and the interstices of their incomparable columns were portals, as it were, to admit the spirit of beauty which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired. If such is Pompeii, what was Athens? What scene was exhibited from the Acropolis, the Parthenon, and the temples of Hercules, and Theseus, and the Winds; the islands of the Ægean Sea, the mountains of Argolis, and the peaks of Pindus and Olympus, and the darkness of the Bœotian forests interspersed?

Shelley draws likewise much solemn instruction from the tombs which rise on either side of the Consular road, and which resemble "not so much hiding-places for that which must decay, as voluptuous chambers for immortal spirits."

"These tombs," he writes, "are the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side, and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of the inconstant wind, as it were like the steps of ghosts. The radiance and magnificence of these dwellings of the dead, the white freshness of the scarcely finished marble, the impassioned or imaginative life of the figures which adorn them, contrast strangely with the simplicity of the houses of those who were living when Vesuvius overwhelmed them.

"I have forgotten the amphitheatre, which is of great magnitude, though much inferior to the Coliseum. I now understand why the Greeks were such great poets; and, above all, I can account, it seems to me, for the harmony, the unity, the perfection, the uniform excellence of all their works of Art. They lived in a perpetual commerce with external Nature, and nourished themselves upon the spirit of its forms. Their theatres were all open to the mountains and the sky. Their columns, the ideal types of a sacred forest, with its roof of interwoven tracery, admitted the light

and wind ; the odour and the freshness of the country penetrated the cities. Their temples were mostly upaithric ; and the flying clouds, the stars, or the deep sky, were seen above. Oh, but for that series of wretched wars, which terminated in the Roman conquest of the world ; but for the Christian religion, which put the finishing strokes on the ancient system ; but for those changes that conducted Athens to its ruin, to what an eminence might not humanity have arrived ! ”

Under the stress of such emotions as these, and the influence of a climate to which he was so unaccustomed, Shelley's strength was soon spent. He felt himself unable to follow up his poetical enterprises. He writes in his letter to Peacock of January 26th, 1819 : “ Oh, if I had health, and strength, and equal spirits, what boundless intellectual improvement might I not gather in this wonderful country ! ” He writes but little ; and while completing the first act of “ Prometheus,” conceives the plan of a great moral and political work, in which he will embody the discoveries of all ages, and endeavour to harmonise the contending creeds by which mankind has been ruled. His restless thoughts, beneath the fiery sky of Naples, depress and crush him ; he realises with despair the impotence of his efforts and of his dreams ; he falls into a mental and physical lassitude which is all the harder to bear because he “ finds not any heart to share in his emotion.” It was at this epoch that he wrote those poems, filled with a deep and intense melancholy, in which he asks from poetry consolation and the power to forget ; such as the “ Lines on a Faded Violet,” the despairing “ Sonnet,” in which, recalling the enthusiasm with which he had attempted to lift “ the painted veil called Life,” and his disappointments, having found none to love, nothing earthly capable of satisfying him, he compares himself to

A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and, like the Preacher, found it not.

But above all, we must read the "Stanzas written in dejection near Naples," if we would form a just idea of Shelley's depression and discouragement at this period. With Shelley, however, despair was never bitter; it is always mingled with resignation and calm; there is a smile even in his tears; he neither curses nor hates. He has no anger against Destiny who has poured out for him so bitter a cup; he finds a charm even in his melancholy, and like a tired child he could lie down and wait till deathlike sleep might steal upon his senses; he will still bear his life of anguish until he feels his cheek grow cold in the warm air, until he hears the sea breathe o'er his dying brain its last monotony. One cannot refrain, when reading this heart-rending poem, from thinking of Christ's agony in the Garden of Olives. Shelley finds consolation in the idea that mankind will lament him, "for I am one," he says, "whom men love not, and yet regret;" and where shall we find words more touching than these of the poet-lover of humanity who pardons his fellows for having been indifferent to him during life, because he hopes that they will regret him after death? It is as beautiful as the cry of Jesus: "Forgive them, Father! they know not what they do!"

These Neapolitan "Stanzas" are to be compared only with the poem entitled "Misery," which was inspired by similar sentiments. In a fragment written earlier called "Death," he draws Misery as seated near an open grave, and he calls upon his "sweetest friend," to dry her tears and be consoled; now he takes up and develops the same subject. Misery, here, is not only his "sweetest friend," but his sister, his beloved, whom he invites to "the bridal bed, beneath the grave," to caresses and "dreadful transports," which will fade away like a vapour in the sleep that lasts for ever.

Shelley concealed with care these effusions from her who shared his work and pleasure ; yet in spite of himself they revealed themselves. He reproached himself for thus betraying the discontent and sadness of his soul, and so unjustly wounding the heart of his beloved Mary, who only, as he said, would have had the right of complaining that she had not been able to extinguish in him even the faculty of describing sorrow. Mary, however, did not complain ; but she suffered, and guessed at the secret wound her poet hid from her. "There is one," she writes in her "Biographical Notes," "who looks back with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods, fancying that had one been more alive to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed ; and yet, enjoying as he seemed to enjoy, the sweet influences of earth and sky, it was difficult to believe that his melancholy was produced by other causes than the continual sufferings which made of him a martyr."

The deep dejection and despair ; words so precise as those in the third strophe of the "Stanzas :

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within, nor calm around, . . .
. . . Nor fame, . . . nor love, . . .

would be difficult to explain, as we have already insinuated, without taking into account some extraordinary moral cause, such as that to which Shelley himself attributes them in the narrative given by Medwin of his connection with the beautiful unknown lady who followed him to Naples, and there died.

After having visited the Lago d'Agniano, and the notorious Grotto del Cane, where Shelley would not allow the tortures of the unfortunate dogs when exposed to the fatal vapours of the

cave to be exhibited before him; Salerno and its magnificent scenery; Pæstum with its sublime colonnades and ruined temples, which appeared to him "as in the shadow of some half-remembered dream," the poet left Naples at the end of February, 1819, to return to Rome.

He travelled slowly, resting one day at Mola di Gaeta, at the inn called the "Villa di Cicerone," from being built on the ruins of the ancient villa, in the midst of orange and citron groves; and at Terracina, where he admired the high conical crags, the Anxur rocks sung by Horace. At Albano he arrived again in sight of Rome: "Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome."

At Rome, Shelley's first enthusiasm for the grand ruins of that vast necropolis awoke anew. He was never tired of revisiting the Coliseum, the monuments of the Forum, the colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, the Arch of Constantine of which the gigantic bas-reliefs, "expressing that mixture of force and crime which is called a Triumph," gave him the idea of his poem, the "Triumph of Life," which death interrupted. But the ruins which he takes most pleasure in describing, because they are daily the witnesses of his thought, and in some measure the sources of his inspiration, are the Thermæ of Caracalla. It was here that he composed the greater part of the "Prometheus Unbound," "among the flowery lawns, the copses of odorously blossoming trees which clothe the tortuous labyrinths of this immense platform, and the arches suspended in mid-air which give vertigo."

Modern Rome was far from arousing in Shelley the same interest as ancient Rome. He would have seen modern Italy vanish without any great regret; he was always painfully struck with the contrast between the moral degradation of the people, and the glorious beauty of Nature and Art. He could not endure to see St. Peter's, because of the fettered convicts in parti-coloured clothes who stand in the square, hoeing out the weeds that grow between the stones of the pavement :

Near them, sit or saunter groups of soldiers armed with loaded muskets. The iron discord of those innumerable chains clanks up with the sonorous air and produces, contrasted with the musical splashing of the fountains, and the deep azure beauty of the sky, and the magnificence of the architecture around, a conflict of sensations allied to madness.

To the sinister clank of chains must be added the noisy acclamations of "Viva Napoleone!" which greeted the Emperor of Austria and Maria Louisa. Such are men in fair Italy! Idiots and slaves! However, the Romans pleased him much, especially the women, whom he excepts from the prejudiced and unfavourable judgment he passes on the Italians :

The Roman women, though totally devoid of every kind of information, or culture of the imagination, or affections, or understanding—and in this respect a kind of gentle savages—yet contrive to be interesting. Their extreme innocence and *naïveté*, the freedom and gentleness of their manners, the total absence of affectation, make an intercourse with them very like an intercourse with uncorrupted children, whom they resemble in loveliness as well as simplicity. I have seen two women in society here of the highest beauty; their brows and lips, and the moulding of the face modelled with sculptural exactness, and the dark luxuriance of their hair, floating over their fine complexions—and the lips—you must hear the commonplaces which escape from them before they cease to be dangerous. The only inferior part are the eyes, which, though good and gentle, want the

mazy depth of colour behind colour with which the intellectual women of England and of Germany entangle the heart in soul-inwoven labyrinths.

The feeling of contempt which modern Italy inspired in Shelley, reveals itself in his letters by the curious criticisms he passed on the monuments of Christian and Papal Art. Thus St. Peter's appears to him much inferior in architectural beauty to St. Paul's; while "internally it exhibits littleness on a large scale, and is in every respect opposed to antique taste."* On the other hand the Pantheon, though not a fourth part of the size, is "the visible image of the universe." The idea of magnitude is swallowed up and lost in the perfection of its proportions, as when you regard the unmeasured dome of heaven.

The ceremonies of Holy Week, celebrated in the year 1818 with more than ordinary pomp on account of the presence of the Emperor of Austria, were matters of indifference to Shelley. Nevertheless, on his way home one day from a visit to the Coliseum, he was present at the Washing of the Pilgrims' Feet, and also the distribution of macaroni by the Cardinals to the hungry beggars. On Easter Sunday he admired the illuminations of the Cupola and the fireworks at the Castle of St. Angelo, which exhibited an additional set-piece representing the Mausoleum of Hadrian.

Shelley at Rome, as elsewhere, went very little into society. The Italians had no attraction for him; and in Mary Shelley's letters but one single Italian lady is mentioned, the Signora Marianna Dionigi, painter, antiquary, and authoress, at whose *conversazioni* all the authors

* He admits, however, that its colonnade, its palace-like facade, and the rest of the Square form an "architectural combination unequalled in the world."

and artists were to be found. On the other hand Shelley met some distinguished fellow-countrymen at Rome such as Lord Guilford, Sir William Drummond, whom he esteemed highly as a thinker, and Miss Curran, daughter of the Irish Master of the Rolls; this lady had some skill in painting, and becoming a friend of the family, attempted the portraits of Shelley, of Mary, of Claire, and of little William (May, 1819).

Rome was to be for Shelley, as he himself called it, both Paradise and the tomb.

The last moments of his stay in the Eternal City were profoundly saddened by the death of his beloved little William, who was carried off after an illness of a few days (June 7th). Shelley had watched during sixty hours of agony without closing his eyes. "We suffered terrible grief when at Rome," writes Mary, "with regard to our eldest boy, who, for his beauty and promise, was our hearts' idol. We left the capital of the world, impatient to quit for a time scenes too closely connected with his presence and his loss." Shelley was now childless; of his five children not one remained.

This blow struck him so sorely that he thought he would never recover any cheerfulness again. His grief expressed itself in some pathetic lines to his "Lost William," no longer there to fill the home with his smiles. William was buried in the Protestant cemetery, already so poetically described in the letter to Peacock, and where his father was so soon to join him.

The poet in his grief thought of quitting Rome and Italy, that had robbed him of all he held most dear, and of returning to England. The child's death had had a terrible effect on his health, and the doctors spoke of sending

him to Africa or Spain; he decided, however, to remain in Italy, and went with Mary to Leghorn, to seek consolation near their kind friends the Gisbornes.

He took with him, as the most precious result of the inspiration of Rome, the three first acts of his "Prometheus."

CHAPTER XVII.

SHELLEY IN ITALY—LEGHORN AND FLORENCE
—“THE CENCI”—“PETER BELL THE THIRD”
—“PROMETHEUS UNBOUND”—1819.

“THE year 1819,” says Mr. Dowden, “was Shelley’s *annus mirabilis*, and in one year to have created such poems as the ‘Prometheus’ and ‘The Cenci,’ is an achievement without parallel in English poetry since Shakespeare lived and wrote.”

The month of June, 1819, found Shelley installed in the Villa Valsovano, between Leghorn and Monte Nero. The villa was a little country house set down in the centre of a grassy farm. A roofed and glazed terrace at the top of the house served Shelley as his study.

He writes to Peacock on July 6th :

I have here a study in a tower, something like Scythrop’s,* where I am just beginning to recover the faculties of reading and writing. My health, whenever no Libeccio blows, improves. From my tower I see the sea, with its islands, Gorgona, Capraja, Elba, and Corsica on one side, and the Apennines on the other.

* Scythrop is the hero of Peacock’s novel, “Nightmare Abbey,” which Shelley had just received and read as a palliative for his melancholy.

It was in this tower that, within the space of three months, he wrote the tragedy of "The Cenci."

"Shelley had often incited me," Mary writes, "to attempt the writing a tragedy; he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent," of which he most erroneously believed himself to be destitute. "He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming or following up a story or a plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination; it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others. . . . He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract, too fond of the theoretical and the ideal, to succeed as a tragedian.

"The subject he had suggested (to me) for a tragedy was Charles I., and he had written to me, 'Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of "St. Leon"* begins with the proud and true sentiment, "There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute." Shakespeare was only a human being.'

"These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence, but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began, and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of its scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake he had made as to the bent of his genius. . . .

"Shelley wished 'The Cenci' to be acted. He was not a playgoer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling-up of the secondary parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however,

* A novel of Godwin's, highly esteemed by Shelley.

he saw Miss O'Neil several times. She was then in the zenith of her glory, and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and the sublime vehemence of passion she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote; and when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of heroine."

"The Cenci" was, in fact, a strong effort on Shelley's part to leave the poetry of metaphysics and abstractions to which his genius inclined him, and to enter on the field of drama, which is both human and popular. Has he succeeded? It would be the greatest mistake to imagine that in "The Cenci" there is an ordinary tragedy which in any way recalls classical tragedy or historical drama, such as it is in the works of the dramatists who preceded Shelley. His original genius could not restrict itself to a settled conventional form, and in approaching the stage, he was to inaugurate an entirely personal conception of dramatic style, in a work that has nothing in common with any which preceded or followed it.* "The Cenci" stands all alone and separate in the history of the theatre; it has no models, and still less any imitators. Once again, and despite his efforts to forget himself, and think only of the effect he desired to produce, Shelley has created his own image in the person of Beatrice. "It is," as De Quincey has said, "the strife between darkness and light in the story of the Cenci which fascinated Shelley." The two principal characters, the incestuous father and his daughter—the gentle yet indomitable Beatrice—are not so much human beings as living and moving abstractions, ideal and superhuman

* In M. Sarrazin's "Poètes Modernes de l'Angleterre," the remarkable chapter devoted to a critique on "The Cenci" will be read with interest; also Mr. Swinburne's beautiful preface to Madame Tola Dorian's translation of this tragedy.

personifications of the two powers which Shelley delighted to pit against each other in all his poetical works; on one side, in the person of Cenci, the strength and the fatality of evil; on the other, that of Beatrice—as he had already shown in Cythna—of all that is most feeble and fragile, the soul of a young girl, resisting that fatality, and triumphing over it by death and martyrdom. The circumstance of incest was in Shelley's eyes only an accessory circumstance which furnished him with the story, and served to bring out the abuses of domestic tyranny with still greater horror to those prejudiced against social impropriety. The Bible, Greece with the "Œdipus," and Calderon, were his authorities for putting upon the stage an irregularity (punished and expiated by murder) to which he attached in his own mind only a conventional criminality, and a purely poetical value. In one of his letters, he propounds a curious theory on this subject, which proves that he was more engrossed, during the composition of "The Cenci," with Calderon than Mary is willing to admit in the passage cited above. He says, referring to one of the tragedies of this great writer, *Absalom's Hair*: "It is a piece full of the deepest and tenderest touches of nature."

The incest scene of "Amon and Tamar" is perfectly tremendous.* Incest is, like many other incorrect things, a very poetical circumstance. It may be the excess of love or hate. It may be the defiance of everything for the sake of another, which clothes itself in the glory of the highest heroism, or it may be that cynical rage which, confounding the good and the bad in existing opinions, breaks through them for the purpose of rioting in selfishness and antipathy. Calderon, following the Jewish historians, has represented Amon's action in the basest point of view—he is a prejudiced savage acting what he abhors; and abhorring that which is the unwilling party to his crime.

* A translation of this scene will be found in the Appendix.

Notwithstanding Peacock's objections to "The Cenci"—he considered the subject too bold, and referred the author to Dryden's "Œdipus," also to the "Mirra" of Alfieri—Shelley, encouraged by his friends at Leghorn, had two hundred and fifty copies of the play printed in Italy, and sent one to Peacock that he might offer it to Mr. Harris for Covent Garden. Harris declined it, and would not even offer the rôle of Beatrice to Miss O'Neil, but promised that if the poet would write another tragedy on another subject, he would willingly accept it.

The success of "The Cenci" with the reading public was such as Shelley was little accustomed to. Two editions appeared during his lifetime.

The Shelley Society has made reparation for the error of Mr. Harris and his contemporaries. Under its auspices "The Cenci" was played by the best actors in London in 1886, and an audience composed of the most distinguished persons in art and literature applauded the tragedy, to which the England of 1819 had preferred—to the displeasure of Byron himself—"Marino Faliero."

The delights of Scythrop's tower do not, however, prevent Shelley from casting longing looks towards England. He writes to Peacock on the 22nd August, 1819:

I most devoutly wish that I were living near London. I do not think I shall settle so far off as Richmond; and to inhabit any intermediate spot on the Thames would be to expose myself to the river damps, not to mention that it is not much to my taste. My inclinations point to Hampstead; but I do not know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious or ever beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment in some form or other is the Alpha and Omega of existence. All that I see in Italy—and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennines half

enclosing the plain—is nothing; it dwindles into smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little, perhaps, in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour. How we prize what we despised when present! So the ghosts of our dead associations rise and haunt us, in revenge for our having let them starve, and abandoned them to perish. . . .

I have been much better these last three weeks. My work on "*The Cenci*," which was done in two months, was a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept up, I think, the pain in my side as sticks do a fire. Since then I have materially improved. I do not walk enough. Claire, who is sometimes my companion, does not dress in exactly the right time. I have no stimulus to walk. Now I go sometimes to Leghorn on business, and that does me good. . . .

I have been reading Calderon in Spanish. A kind of Shakespeare is this Calderon; and I have some thoughts, if I find that I cannot do anything better, of translating some of his plays.

The particular business which took Shelley oftenest to Leghorn was the project of constructing a steamboat, in which Henry Reveley then took a great interest. The poet was ambitious of being the first to put a steamboat on the Mediterranean which should regularly ply between Leghorn, Genoa, and Marseilles, and Shelley devoted all his accustomed energy and enthusiasm to this enterprise; he took the most vivid interest in the designs, and advanced the requisite sums, making over to the young engineer all the profits, and reserving for himself the glory of success—or the shame of failure.

"Well, how goes on all?" he writes on October 28th, to Henry Reveley; "the boilers, the keel of the boat, and the cylinder, and all the other elements of that soul which is to guide our '*monstruo de fuego y agua*' over the sea? . . . Your boat will be to the ocean of water what this earth is to the ocean of æther—a prosperous and swift voyager."

Unluckily, a few months later the departure of the *Gisbornes* for England put a stop to these attractive schemes. Shelley found his only consolation in going to contemplate the steamboat

"asleep under the walls," where he was afraid, he said, to waken it, for the same reason that he would have feared to awaken Ariadne after Theseus had left her—unless he himself had been Bacchus.

Soon after (September, 1819), Shelley left the Villa Valsovano, to the regret of all his Leghorn friends, even of Oscar the house-dog, who was inconsolable at his departure. He was attracted by Florence, the capital of the fine arts, and would have remained there longer only for the wind from the Apennines, which he found both unpleasant and insalubrious. But a great joy came to him at Florence: the birth (November 12th, 1819) of another son, who was christened on January 25th, 1820, receiving the names of Percy Florence.

During his sojourn of a few months at Florence, there was seldom a day in which he did not visit its picture galleries, and especially its sculptures: "There, amid the varied creations of Greek Art, he rested from his most arduous labours. The 'Niobe,' the 'Venus Anadyomene,' the 'Bacchus and Ampelus,' were objects of his most unwearied admiration. I have heard him expatiate on the subject," says Medwin, "with all the eloquence of a poet. He had made ample notes on the wonderful masterpieces of the Gallery, from which he allowed me to make extracts which surpass in eloquence anything that Winckelmann has written on the subject."

Shelley's letters at this period are full of the artistic enthusiasm with which "he drank the spirit" of those marvellous forms of antique sculpture.

"All worldly thoughts and cares," he wrote, "seem to vanish from before the sublime emotions such spectacles create; and I am deeply impressed with the great difference of happiness enjoyed by those who live at a distance from these incarnations of all that the finest minds have conceived of beauty, and those who can resort to their company at pleasure. What should we think if we were forbidden to read the great writers who have left us their works?"

It was during that period of mental intoxication, that at Delesert's reading-room in Florence, on one of the early days of October, he came across a late number of the *Quarterly Review*, in which he had been told he should find the famous article on "Laon and Cythna," and be much amused thereby. The grotesque anathemas of the chaste Reviewer did, in fact, move him to convulsive laughter. The article, a very bitter one, was at first attributed by Shelley to Southey, but it was in fact the production of a former Eton school-fellow, John Taylor Coleridge. From criticism of the author, the Reviewer passed to censure on the man :

He is too young, too ignorant, too vicious, to reform any other world than the little world of his own heart. If we might withdraw the veil of private life, and tell all we know about the writer, it would be indeed a disgusting picture that we should exhibit ; but it would be an unanswerable comment to our text, for it is not easy for those who read only, to conceive how much low selfishness, how much unmanly cruelty, are consistent with the laws of this universal and lawless love.*

Such drivel could not affect Shelley. His was a soul inaccessible to self-love, but full of grief and indignation at the sufferings and wretchedness of his fellow-beings, his fellow countrymen.

He had continued, in Italy, to watch the course of events and politics in England. The news of the "Manchester Massacre" (August 16th, 1819), "that piece of bloodthirsty and murderous oppression," he likens to "the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The

* Hunt warmly defended his friend in the *Examiner*, and the famous Wilson contributed an article to the January number of *Blackwood's Magazine*, in which he compared the Quarterly Reviewer to a dunce rating a man of genius : "It is impossible to read a page of his 'Revolt of Islam,' without perceiving that in nerve and pith of conception he approaches more nearly to Scott and Byron than any other of their contemporaries."

tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learnt with equal docility. . . . What is to be done? Something, assuredly."

All that was in his power was to take up the lyre, and in Pindaric odes express his indignation and patriotism. It was now that he wrote his Revolutionary songs—some in burning stanzas and of visionary vengeance, as in the "Mask of Anarchy," the "Ode to Liberty," the "God save the Queen"; others in the form of the bitterest, most withering political satire that ever scourged nations, kings, and Ministers, viz. the admirable Sonnet on "England in 1819"; "Lines written during the Administration of Lord Castlereagh"; "Similes of Two Political Characters," and, above all, his incomparable "Song to the Men of England," the most eloquent and pathetic commentary ever written on the *Sic vos non vobis* of Virgil.

No better idea of the versatility of Shelley's genius can be gained than by comparing these diatribes of Juvenal-like wrath and bitterness, with his masterpieces of humorous and burlesque satire, such as "Peter Bell the Third" and "Swell-foot the Tyrant." "The Cenci" brought us close to the "Œdipus" of Sophocles; but these are near to Aristophanes.

"Peter Bell the Third" is an ideally perfect satire on literary apostasy, and in particular on the apostasy of Wordsworth.

At the commencement of the French Revolution, Wordsworth had been among those Englishmen whom the awakening of Liberty had filled with fire and enthusiasm.

He had dreamed of inaugurating a youthful, human, equalising poesy, which should put an end to the reign of the conventional, and the vapidty of traditional and classic poetry, which should

force the lowliest and most familiar realities into the mould of verse ; a revolution in both thought and Art analogous to that which Madame de Staël desired for France in 1789. Wordsworth worked all his life long at this revolution, but he soon departed from the generous feelings that had inspired his purpose, and alone could give it warmth, vitality, and durability. He withdrew into himself, and gave up his humanitarian visions ; the triumph of despotic power and the Conservative reaction threw him into the camp of the most determined upholders of established institutions ; and even so far back as 1809 he had become so shameless a pervert as to write his "Pamphlet on the Capitulation of Cintra," in which he reproached Pitt for not making war upon France more vigorously.

In 1818, Wordsworth, who had become the "bard" of the Established Church, published two Addresses to the Liberals of Westmoreland in favour of the Conservatives, thus, by dint of flattery and servility to the reigning power, establishing his claims to the post of Poet Laureate, in which he, in fact, succeeded Southey in 1843.

Shelley, from his earliest boyhood, had been a passionate admirer of Wordsworth. Many intellectual and literary sympathies attracted him to a school of poetry which was essentially personal, sentimental, and dreamy, and which invested all the phenomena of the universe with meaning ; he forgave Wordsworth for what was "drowsy and frowzy" in him, as Byron called it, his puerile inventions, and his dull prosing, for the sake of the moral and emotional idealism through which the solitary poet of Mount Rydal contemplated and vivified Nature. More than one trace may be found in Shelley's works of the influence of that poet who was moved by the humblest flower or blade of grass to "thoughts too deep for tears."

He had at an early period competed with him on his own ground, by treating some of his favourite themes with ingenuousness and simplicity, and while at Geneva had succeeded in imparting to Byron so great an appreciation of a poet whom the haughty author of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" had described as "the meanest object of the lowly group," that Wordsworth recognised himself in the third canto of "Childe Harold."

But the greater his admiration and affection for the favoured child of the Muses, the more did Shelley deplore the part taken by him in political matters. In July, 1818, when the Addresses to the Liberals of Westmoreland were published, he wrote in the following unmeasured language to Peacock: "I have been informed of the unfortunate termination of the Westmoreland elections. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villainy of those apostates. What a beastly and pitiful wretch, that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets."

The satire of "Peter Bell the Third" must have been conceived at this period.

Shelley wanted to prove that the poet, capable of abjuring the gods of his youth, and of bowing down before power and public opinion, was condemned to see his sources of inspiration dried up, and to fall into platitudes and dulness.

But Shelley had not waited until those latter days to brand the apostasy of his favourite poet; in 1815, he had bewailed in touching lines the desertion of him whom he calls the "Poet of Nature, . . . a lone star whose light did shine

On some frail bark in Winter's midnight roar;
 . . . A rock-built refuge . . .
 Above the blind and battling multitude."

Shelley's reproaches did not reach the ear of the god. Wordsworth had become verbose, oracular, tolerating none lower than himself, scarcely admitting there could be any one higher, and comparing himself to Milton.

He disdained contemporary poets, especially those who dared to stray from the paths newly trodden by him, and he ignored Shelley.

On one occasion, before Trelawney was personally acquainted with the author of "*Queen Mab*," he met an English tourist at Geneva, accompanied by his wife and sister, who was bitterly lamenting that Switzerland was becoming a commonplace and civilised country, wherein a lover of Nature could no longer find a solitary spot in which to contemplate at leisure the wild beauty of the scenery.

"Yesterday," he grumbled, "at break of day, I scaled the most rugged height within my reach; it looked inaccessible; this pleasant delusion was quickly dispelled; I was rudely startled out of a deep reverie by the accursed jarring, jingling, and rumbling of a calèche, and harsh voices that drowned the torrent's fall." The grumbling tourist was Wordsworth. Trelawney accosted him, and without further ceremony asked him plainly: "What do you think of Shelley as a poet?" "Nothing," replied Wordsworth; then seeing the astonishment of his interlocutor, he continued: "a poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five, we may conclude cannot, and never will do so." "But '*The Cenci*'?" "Won't do," he replied, shaking his head, as he got into the carriage; a rough-coated Scotch terrier followed him. "This hairy fellow is our flea-trap." To the honour of Wordsworth it must be admitted that, at a subsequent period, he overcame his prejudice against Shelley, and rendered him justice, "*Peter Bell the Third*" notwithstanding.*

* Shelley so designated his poem because it was written

Shelley considered "Peter Bell the Third" as merely a slight satire in which, as he says, both lines and language had it their own way. It was hardly finished, when a political incident drew his attention to one of his favourite subjects, that of the Defence of the Liberty of the Press. The publication of the works of the well-known revolutionist, Thomas Paine, and in particular of his "Age of Reason," had been the occasion of one of the most odious persecutions due to the English law of libel, in the beginning of the present century. Carlile, the publisher, was condemned to prison, but continued, from his cell, to appeal to public opinion in the columns of the *Republican*. Shelley could not fail to be interested in the fate of so courageous a victim; he took up the defence of Carlile in an eloquent letter intended for the *Examiner*. In that letter he warmly attacks the capricious restrictions imposed on the Press by a power as illusory as it is arbitrary. He names himself, among a constellation of great men and great writers, who, if Law were Justice, would be more rightly prosecuted than a poor bookseller. He claims trial by their peers for Carlile and Paine; a jury composed, not of so-called Christians, but of the philosophers and Deists who are unjustly shielded by their high social position from similar prosecution: such as Sir William Drummond, "the most acute metaphysical critic of the age, a man of profound learning . . . unblemished integrity of character," and as undisguised an opponent of Christianity as Paine; Godwin, the author of "Political Justice" and the "Enquirer," who has treated Christianity as an "exploded

after Wordsworth's "Peter Bell," and after a parody thereon, written by J. Hamilton Reynolds, one of the three young poets patronised by Leigh Hunt, and was especially directed against Wordsworth's alleged puerilities and literary fatuity. See Mr. Forman's fine edition.

superstition, to which, in the present state of knowledge, it was unworthy as a moral philosopher, to advert;" and Mr. Burdon, a gentleman of great fortune, who had published a book "called 'Materials for Thinking,' in which he plainly avows his disbelief in the divine authority of the Bible."

Hunt, to whom the letter was addressed (Nov. 3rd), did not publish it, on account, probably, of its strong language and the high personages attacked by Shelley. The poet acquiesced without demur in his friend's decision, and set to work on a political treatise less aggressive in tone, in which he proposed to include the theory of every needful reform in Government.* According to Mr. Dowden's analysis of the work, Shelley, after rapidly sketching the effect of Reform, the French Revolution, and the eighteenth century on the "hopes and aspirations of the human race," passes on to consider the various reforms necessary to the government of England, and the possible and desirable mode in which they should take place. The advance of literature in his own country at the beginning of the century, seemed to Shelley to be the prophecy of great social and political change.† One of the principal causes of the social misery in England he held to be the modern device of

* The "Philosophical View of Reform," which was begun in December, 1819, and in great part finished in May, 1820, has remained in manuscript. Mr. Forman has published but two short fragments. Mr. Dowden, who has seen the manuscript, considers that "it sets forth the writer's opinions on political subjects with sufficient fulness, and makes us acquainted with the side of his mind presented to actual politics as no published writing of Shelley's has done." It remains for the Shelleyan Society to fill the void by publishing these important passages.

† The passage containing this prophetic view may be found at the close of his "Defence of Poetry."

public credit, by means of which companies and bankers grew rich at the expense of the poor; the increase of the national industry which this system is supposed to effect, ends merely in increasing the misery of the poor and the luxury of the rich; "to make a manufacturer" (an artisan, as we now say) "work sixteen hours where he had only worked eight; to turn children into lifeless and bloodless machines at an age when otherwise they would be at play before the cottage doors of their parents; to augment indefinitely the proportion of those who enjoy the profit of the labour of others . . . to create a new aristocracy of attorneys, excisemen, directors, Government pensioners, usurers, stock-jobbers, who . . . can only eat, and drink, and sleep, and in the intervals of these actions cringe and lie," without ever exercising the true and noble faculties of the soul, while the poor toiler knows but pain and misery in the present, and has, in the future, only "those gleams of hope which seem to speak to him of Paradise, only to make darkness visible, like the flames of Milton's hell."

"The so-called National Debt is but the debt of the privileged classes and of the tyrants who incurred it in unjust and liberticide wars. The labour which it represents . . . since the commencement of the American war, would, if properly employed, have covered our land with monuments of architecture exceeding the sumptuousness and the beauty of Egypt and Athens; it might have made every peasant's cottage a little paradise of comfort, with every convenience desirable . . . neat tables and chairs, and good beds, and a collection of useful books; and our fleet, manned by sailors well-paid and well-clothed, might have kept watch round this glorious island against the less enlightened nations which assuredly would have envied its prosperity." As

a remedy to the then state of things, Shelley proposed that the privileged classes should alone be held legally responsible for the National Debt, and that special tribunals should be created for its liquidation.

As to reform of Parliament and the system of representation, Shelley, in this treatise, is most moderate in his views; universal suffrage, or the admission of women to the rights of suffrage, seem to him dangerous and premature measures.

As he advanced in life, his aversion to violent means and sudden resolves increased.

"The great thing to do," he said, "is to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy; to inculcate with fervour both the right of resistance and the duty of forbearance. You know my principles incite me to take all the good I can get in politics, for ever aspiring to something more. I am one of those whom nothing will fully satisfy, but who are ready to be partially satisfied in all that is practicable. . . . I have a motto on a ring in Italian, '*Il buon tempo verrà.*' There is a tide both in public and in private affairs, which awaits both men and nations."

He liked also to quote Rousseau's saying, that he would rather see things remain as they are than shed one drop of blood. He never lost faith in the ultimate triumph of social reform; but that triumph would be due to a slow and calculated revolution based principally on the moral reform of individuals. It was on this human and philosophic basis that he founded his hopes of the universal regeneration, of the palingenesis of mankind and the world, which he sang with such poetic and sublime fervour in the fourth act of his "*Prometheus Unbound.*"

This, the last supplementary portion, written at Florence in December, 1819, is the culminating point of Shelley's genius as a lyric poet. This grandiose and unique work, which we possess in its entirety, lifts its author at once above every lyric poet of the century.

Shelley was conscious of the value of his "Prometheus," and esteemed it in proportion to the labour it had cost him :

My friends say my "Prometheus" is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery ; it may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama ; it is original, and cost me severe labour. If that is not durable poetry, tried by the severest test, I do not know what is. It is a lofty subject, not inadequately treated, and should not perish with me.

Shelley's judgment has been confirmed by posterity, and whatever may be the defects of this prodigious work in detail, to us it appears like one of the gigantic Sphinxes of the desert, defying man and time alike. We willingly join in Mr. Rossetti's fine panegyric :

There is, I suppose, no poem comparable, in the fair sense of that word, to "Prometheus Unbound." The immense scale and boundless scope of the conception ; the marble majesty and extramundane passions of the personages ; the sublimity of ethical aspiration ; the radiance of ideal and poetic beauty which saturates every phase of the subject, and (almost, as it were) wraps it from sight at times, and transforms it out of sense into spirit ; the rolling river of great sound and lyrical rapture ; form a combination not to be matched elsewhere, and scarcely to encounter competition. There is another source of greatness in this poem neither to be foolishly lauded nor (still less) undervalued. It is this : that "Prometheus Unbound," however remote the foundation of its subject-matter, and unactual its executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions, the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crusts of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat and renovated renovator of his planet. This it is, I apprehend, which places "Prometheus" clearly, instead of disputably, at the summit of all latter poetry ; the fact that it embodies, in forms of truly ecstatic beauty, the dominant passion of the dominant intellects of the age, and especially of one of the extremest and highest among them all, the author himself. It is the ideal poem of perpetual and triumphant progression—the Atlantis of Man Emancipated.

Mrs. Shelley has very clearly described in

her notes, the spirit, genesis, and development of this grand composition :

During his travels in Italy (1818-1819), Shelley meditated on the subject of his drama. . . . But though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the "Prometheus." At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. . . .

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity ; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. He was attached to this opinion with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionised as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was a cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all, even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity. A victim full of fortitude and hope, and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of good—such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealised image of the same subject.

He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in Heaven, portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus ; and the god offered freedom from torture on

condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture, and set him free ; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his own peculiar views. The son, greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture, till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evils done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus ; she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the fourth act, the poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealises the forms of creation, such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth—the guide of our planet through the realms of sky—while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry ; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealise the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and

abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery. . . . In reading Shelley's poetry we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of imagery ; for though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprang from his own genius. . . .

The tone of the composition [of "*Prometheus Unbound*"] is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasingly beautiful, and more varied and daring [than in any of his previous attempts]. . . . Throughout the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love ; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, until the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

No ancient myth has, in equal measure to that of Prometheus, awakened in the human soul the longing to lift the thick veil that hides the origin of the world and of the human race. It was very variously interpreted even in the time of the Greeks, by Hesiod and Æschylus, and has become to the modern world a terrible Sphinx, which every soul haunted by the symbolically expressed mysteries of the ancient wisdom has in turn consulted, receiving replies in harmony with its own philosophic convictions, or those of its century. Among all the various interpretations, one seems to have prevailed ; that one which makes of Prometheus a personification of good, in the struggle of good and evil, of spirit as against force, of liberty and progress in conflict with tyranny and ignorance—an eternal struggle which seems the very condition of life and being. The Greeks in delivering Prometheus, in order that he may be reconciled with Zeus his eternal enemy, must surely have had some conception of the inherent necessity of things, of the "struggle for life," as it is called by modern science, of life itself consisting in struggle, and of the discord which produces the essential and final harmony of the world. We are inclined to believe that

they had ; hence we must seek in the third part of the *Æschylean* trilogy, unhappily lost to us, for the true philosophic and scientific meaning of the mythic Prometheus. Shelley's interpretation is of an opposite character. Being absolutely convinced that with the disappearance of Zeus and all his representatives, a new golden age would be created on earth by the strength of the human will alone, he could not accept a compromise to which the wise temperament of Greece resigned itself, unless he might make the best of it by the aid of his faculties and his genius. Christianity and its ultra-terrestrial utopias had not passed in vain through the mind of the poet. Like the Christian Prometheus, the victim of the Judaic Zeus, he also dreamed of an everlasting Paradise for humanity, but a paradise to be found on earth purified and regenerated by love. Christian and Biblical ideas suggested to him the thought of extending this regeneration not only to the moral and human world, but also to the entire universe of suns and spheres, whose destinies, as in the Mosaic Genesis, seemed linked with that of humanity itself. This grandiose dream all to the honour of mind, the only god of this world, has at any rate given us in the last act, or rather last chant, of "*Prometheus Unbound*" the most sublime hymn ever uttered to the glory of the eternal harmony of Nature, as apprehended by the human soul in communion with her.

Michelet, in "*La Mer*," has written like a poet of the symphony of worlds of which science is endeavouring to read the score ; of the mathematical relation of the stars between themselves, which are the harmonic intervals of the celestial music ; "*the earth*," he says, "*in her tides, greater and less, speaks to her sisters the planets. Do they reply ? We must believe they do. From their fluid elements they too must rise up, conscious*

of the impulse of the earth. Mutual attraction, the bent of each planet to come forth from its egoism, must be the cause of sublime dialogues in the heavens. Unfortunately the ear of man hears but the least part of these."

Shelley heard one of those dialogues, and has marvellously rendered it for us in the fourth act of his "Prometheus."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHELLEY IN ITALY—PISA—LEGHORN—THE BATHS
OF ST. GIULIANO — LETTER TO MARIA
GISBORNE—"HYMN TO MERCURY"—"THE
WITCH OF ATLAS"—SHELLEY AND KEATS—
"ADONAI'S"—1820.

IT was not without keen regret that Shelley was forced by the "infernal cold of Florence," to leave the "fairest of cities beneath the sun," the sculptures he so dearly loved, and the delightful wooded banks of the Arno, where he studied Dante, and wrote the last canto of the "Prometheus." He took refuge at Pisa (January 26th, 1820) from the terrible Apennine winds, anticipating enjoyment from sky, water, and mountains. "I must suffer at any rate," he says, "but I expect to suffer less in a boat than in a carriage."

With the spring there came, in the milder climate of Pisa, the usual improvement in Shelley's health, which was likewise promoted by the wise treatment of the celebrated Dr. Vacca. "Only for certain moral causes," he "would have been greatly benefited" by his "residence in Italy." Among these moral causes must be reckoned the departure of the Gisbornes for England, the final failure of the steamboat undertaking, the refusal of his tragedy at Covent Garden,

his homesick longing for England, and above all, the vexations inflicted on him by Godwin.

It was no slight source of pain to Shelley, that Godwin, after all his sacrifices in the endeavour to serve him, should treat him with so little consideration and friendship. Godwin was on the brink of ruin, and laid the blame of his unfortunate position, which was due to his own carelessness, on his friend and benefactor. Shelley grew weary of flinging money into the Skinner Street abyss :

Except for the *good-will* which this transaction seems to have produced between you and me, this money, for any advantage that it ever conferred on you, might as well have been thrown into the sea. Had I kept in my own hands this £4000 or £5000, and administered it in trust for your permanent advantage, I should have been indeed your benefactor. . . . Sir Philip Sidney, when dying and consumed with thirst, gave the helmet of water which was brought to him to the wounded soldier who stood beside him. It would not have been generosity, but folly, had he poured it on the ground, as you would that I should the wrecks of my once prosperous fortune. . . . If you are sincere on this subject, why, instead of seeking to plunge one already half-ruined for your sake into deeper ruin, do you not procure the £400 by your own active power? A person of your extraordinary accomplishments might easily obtain from the booksellers, for the promise of a novel, a sum exceeding this amount. Your "Answer to Malthus" would sell for at least £400.

Meanwhile some pleasant acquaintances at Pisa made a break in the clouds. One of the celebrities of Pisa was Professor Vacca, to whom the city subsequently raised a monument, designed by Thorwaldsen, in the Campo Santo. Vacca's views on philosophy and politics were for the most part the same as Shelley's; and he did the latter a great service by inducing him to dispense with doctors and drugs, and trust to Nature for a cure.

In addition to this friend there was Lady Mountcashel, a woman of superior attainments, who

had been the favourite pupil of Mary Wollstonecraft thirty years before, when Mary was governess in the family of Lord Kingston; and on the occasion of Godwin's visit to Ireland in 1800, Lady Mountcashel had received him with hospitality. She had retained the republican and philosophic principles of her masculine education; her mind was cultivated, her disposition mild, benevolent and imperturbably serene. She had long been separated from her husband, the Earl of Mountcashel, and was living in Italy with Mr. George William Tighe, who, being disgusted with the world, lived apart from it in the company of his books. According to Medwin Lady Mountcashel inspired Shelley with his exquisite poem of the "Sensitive Plant."

Yet, in spite of the charm that the society of friends, so congenial to his intellect, had for Shelley, his heart was in London with the Gisbornes. On May 26th, 1820, he wrote to them :

I am just returned from a visit to Leghorn, Casciano, and the old fortress at Sant' Elmo. . . . Everything seems in excellent order at Casa Ricci—garden, pigeons, tables, chairs, and beds. . . . What a glorious prospect you had from the windows of Sant' Elmo! The enormous chain of the Apennines, with its many-folded ridges, islanded in the misty distance of the air; the sea, so immensely distant, appearing as if at your feet; and the prodigious expanse of the plain of Pisa, and the dark green marshes lessened almost to a strip by the height of the blue marshes overhanging them. Then the wild and unreclaimed fertility of the foreground, and the chestnut-trees, whose vivid foliage made a sort of resting-place to the sense before it darted itself to the jagged horizon of this prospect. I was altogether delighted. I had a respite from my nervous symptoms, which was compensated to me by a violent cold in the head. There was a tradition about you at Sant' Elmo—an *English family that had lived here in the time of the French*.

We go to Bagni next month. . . . I am undergoing a course of the Pisan baths, on which I lay no singular stress—but they soothe. I ought to have peace of mind, leisure, tranquillity; this I expect soon. Our anxiety about Godwin

is very great, and any information that you could give a day or two earlier than he might, respecting any decisive event in his lawsuit, would be a great relief. Your impressions about Godwin (I speak especially to Madonna *mia*, who had known him before) will especially interest me. You know that added years only add to my admiration of his intellectual powers, and even the moral resources of his character. . . . To see Hunt is to like him. To know Hogg, if any one can know him, is to know something very unlike and inexpressibly superior, to the great mass of men.

This charming letter was written in Reveley's study, and may serve as a commentary upon the admirable epistle in verse which Shelley addressed shortly afterwards to Maria Gisborne—one of the gems of his familiar poetry in which we knew not whether to admire most the perfection of the descriptions, the exquisite delicacy of the sentiment or the incomparable wit and humour with which the poet avails himself of the smallest details. All his London friends are named in it with an affectionate regard that does not exclude impartiality or raillery.

It was during his stay at Casa Ricci that, one summer evening wandering with Mary "among the lanes whose myrtle hedges were the bowers of fire-flies," he heard the song of the skylark, and instantly interpreted its ideal impression in one of his most perfect poems:—his salutation to the bird, or rather to the blithe spirit disdainful of earth, whose clear and piercing strain he envies, and would fain learn how to teach the world "such harmonious madness."

The days were spent pleasantly at Pisa in the study of Latin and Greek with Mary, and Shelley rendered into *ottava rima* the Homeric Hymn to Mercury. The playful tone of the free translation struck a new vein of light-hearted inspiration, which soon showed itself in his marvellously fanciful "Witch of Atlas."

The heat of Leghorn in August had forced

the Shelleys to remove to the Baths of San Giuliano, near Lucca, and, after an excursion to Monte San Pellegrino, he wrote in three days that wonderful poem which he describes as entirely fanciful, and, if its merit be measured by the labour it cost, absolutely worthless. In his heart Shelley probably preferred this fanciful improvisation to his more laborious productions such as "The Cenci." It is a fairy tale, but such an one as might be told and heard by pure spirits—a fairy tale, as Mr. Rossetti says, "enchancing and imperishable." We may observe with the same writer that a clue to its meaning is to be found if we understand the Witch to be the Spirit of Beauty, of which all the beauties in the world is but a shadow, "whose words, though too fine to be articulate to mortal ear, fill us with a longing for all high truth; whose presence, though invisible, quickens within us all hope and joy and love." Here we must pause, nor try to analyse that which refuses to be analysed. Painting alone, and painting by a sylph or an Ariel, could render something of that divine phantasy. "What an admirable subject for Retsch!" says Medwin. "A second 'Midsummer Night's Dream!'"*

It seems incredible that the poet who had just written the "Witch of Atlas" should be the same man who, steadily observing the political state of Europe, suffered no symptom of that awakening of Liberty among his contemporaries, whose approaching triumph he foresaw, to escape his notice. The year 1820 seemed to respond to that presentiment: in the south of Europe the spirit of revolution was aroused. Spain gave the signal, and the flame soon spread to the south of Italy, to Naples, and Sicily. The poet's heart beat in sympathy with all. "Sicily, like Naples, is free!"

* Retsch's "Outlines to Shakespeare's Plays."

he wrote to Mary (July 23rd) "the enthusiasm of the inhabitants was prodigious; the women fought from the houses, raining down boiling oil on the assailants." And in September, "At Naples the Constitutional party have declared to the Austrian Minister that, if the Emperor should make war upon them, their first action would be to put to death *all* the members of the royal family—a necessary and most just measure, when the forces of the combatants, as well as the merits of their respective causes, are so unequal. That kings should be everywhere the hostages for liberty—nothing more admirable!" In the fervour of his revolutionary enthusiasm Shelley wrote the "Ode to Liberty" and the "Ode to Naples" successively.

There are few lyrics so thrilling, so highly charged with passion and enthusiasm, as the "Ode to Liberty," in which Shelley unrolls before our dazzled gaze the history of the victories and defeats of that "virgin huntress swifter than the moon," and "terror of the world's wolves." Athens, Rome, Arminius, Christianity, the Saxon Alfred, Luther, Milton, France in '93, and Napoleon pass in succession before us, leaving the world either luminous or obscure, according as Liberty casts or withholds "the shadow of her coming." A like passion and a like eloquence are breathed in the "Ode to Naples." The poet is still filled with the poetic recollections of Pompeii and Baïæ, of "the unknown graves of the dead kings of melody" (Homer and Virgil). From the splendour of the Elysian shores he rises to the contemplation of the destiny of Naples, of her hoped-for freedom—the signal eagerly awaited by the whole of Italy:

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling pæan
 From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
 Till silence became music? From the Ææan
 To the cold Alps, eternal Italy

Starts to hear thine ! The sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light and music ; widowed Genoa wan
By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring "Where is Doria ?" Fair Milan,
Within whose veins long ran
The viper's palsying venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. . . .

Florence, beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for freedom's expectation ;
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,
As ruling once by power, so now by admiration—
An athlete stripped to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore ;
As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong ! Oh, hail !

Austrian bayonets unhappily soon crushed the Neapolitan revolution. Shelley was deeply affected by this disaster, and was indignant that his friend Moore could applaud it in verse unworthy of a poet and an Irishman.

Should Italy ever commemorate her resurrection to freedom and national life by a monument, she would be ungrateful indeed did she not place beside the names of her warrior-heroes that of the poet who sang so gloriously of her hopes and electrified her patriotism. When lyrical poetry attains to such a height and power as his, we may pronounce it to be, as Shelley himself said, speaking out of the very faith with which he was inspired, "a prophecy and a cause."

While Shelley was thus pouring forth a flood of lyrical verse in his most serious and eloquent vein, the tragi-comedy then being played in England, with Queen Caroline for its heroine, afforded him an opportunity of exercising the kind of talent he had so unexpectedly disclosed in "Peter Bell the Third"—that faculty of original

and powerful irony, that spirit of comical satire, burlesque and yet poetical—a mixture hitherto unknown in the incisiveness of Swift and the airiness of Aristophanes.

The “*Œdipus Tyrannus*,” like “*Peter Bell the Third*,” was merely a light and playful improvisation, but it was an improvisation of genius.

One day, while looking at some extracts from *Le Courrier Français*, he lighted upon a strange and astonishing piece of news. Queen Caroline, on hearing of the death of George III., had hastened to England. Deserted and dishonoured by the grotesque King, George IV., the too notorious Princess was about to claim her rights as wife and queen. The result is well known; the story of the long and shameful suit occupies the whole of the political annals of England, in 1820. Never before had any people offered so odious, repulsive, and ridiculous a spectacle to the world; it alone would have justified all the anathemas heaped by Shelley on the head of Royalty.

Long before this, Shelley had formed his opinion of George IV.; it was that of every thinking Englishman; it was that which Thackeray has emphatically expressed in his “*Four Georges*,” “I do not know that there could be a bitterer satire on English society at that period, than to say it was able to admire George IV.”

In common with many others, Shelley had at first been blinded by the farce of Liberalism, acted by the Prince of Wales becoming the friend and disciple of Fox and Sheridan; he had relied for a moment on the hopes raised by a youth who shouted for “*Wilkes and Liberty!*” But he saw behind the mask, and divined from the conduct of the Regent what the future King of England would be.

In “*Swellfoot the Tyrant*,” we recognise the

historic George IV., of the memoirs of the time; the "base fellow" of Lady Hester Stanhope, the hero of the dinner-table and of dandyism, the inventor of maraschino punch, the fat, crowned fop, exclusively engrossed, amid grave European events, with the cut of a coat, or the seasoning of a dish. All these details, taken from history, are invested with heroic and gigantic forms and proportions in Shelley's drama. By a process of poetical hyperbole somewhat analogous to that of Rabelais, George IV. becomes the ideal dandy, glutton, and tyrant; the ungrateful friend of Sheridan and Brummel becomes as Swellfoot (*Œdipus*) the "Man-Milliner to red Bellona," the dainty epicure is transformed into a Homeric Gargantua, who devours in a single *plat*, devised by his Persian cook, what would suffice to feed a dozen families for a winter or two; the sceptical and fickle Don Juan, whose life has known hardly one real passion except hatred and contempt of his wife, becomes a tragical George Dandin, a victim of the jealous divinity who "waves o'er the couch of wedded kings, the torch of Discord with its fiery hair," the famous green bag laid on the table in the House of Lords, and containing the proofs of the royal adultery, is changed into a terrible invention of Hell, a poison more mortal than death itself "sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud, who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor," and baptized by "the Primate of all Hell."

In order to idealise Caroline while remaining true to History, Shelley had only to depict her as the credulous and enthusiastic folly of the populace of London saw her. But he was no dupe of the political comedy played round the Queen; he knew very well that the madcap Princess, who seemed all through her life to be bent on the self-destruction of her honour and her reputation, had always been a despised tool in the hands of

the Whigs, a puppet of the Opposition which they would fling away on the first change in public opinion. He wrote to Peacock in this sense, July 12th :

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted Her Sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry. I, for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners every one would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues, should be turned into a heroine because she is a queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king ; and he, no less than his Ministers, are so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them is admirable.

He was willing to believe in the famous "green bag" :

"I wonder what in the world the Queen has done," he writes at the beginning of this tragi-comedy ; "I should not wonder, after the whispers I have heard, to find that the green bag contained evidence that she had imitated Pasiphaë and that the Committee should recommend to Parliament a Bill to exclude all Minotaurs from the succession. What silly stuff is this to employ a great nation about ! I wish the King and the Queen, like Punch and his wife, would fight out their disputes in person."

In the foregoing lines we perceive the first conception and plan of "Swellfoot the Tyrant." Iona Taurina, the Queen, the new Pasiphaë (after long wanderings in all the fabulous countries to which Æschylus sends the unhappy Io), stung and harassed by the same gadfly, returns to Thebes where the husband and wife settle their edifying differences by a solemn and decisive trial.

How did Shelley conceive the idea of the Aristophanic chorus which represents the Theban,

that is, the English people? From a mere coincidence.

"We were then" (August, 1820), writes Mrs. Shelley, "at the Baths of San Giuliano; a friend came to visit us on the day when a fair was held in the square, beneath our windows. Shelley read to us his 'Ode of Liberty' and was riotously accompanied by the grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair. He compared it to the 'Chorus of Frogs' in the satiric drama of *Aristophanes*; and it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous association suggesting another, he imagined a political satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus; and *Swellfoot* was begun."

The notion of representing the English people under the form of the most selfish and ease-loving of animals must have amused Shelley. As he makes one of the characters say: "How can I find a more appropriate term," than pig-gishness, "to include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,

And all that fit Bastia as a nation
To teach the other nations how to live?"

Had not Burke, that oracle of Anglican cant, said that an Englishman is, above all, "a religious animal?" Had he not compared Revolutionists to a handful of grasshoppers hidden in the heather, while millions of fine beasts repose in the shade of the British oak, and ruminant in silence? To repair somewhat the irreverence of his first metamorphosis, the poet invented another; the pigs of every caste and kind were transformed at the close of the piece into bulls, the "fine beasts" of Burke, and by a fantastic etymology, the Ionian Minotaur becomes the legendary founder of a people who take pride in their nickname of John Bull.

Shelley could not fail to depict the advisers and ministers of George IV.'s disastrous reign, under hideous and grinning masks. A Welling-

ton, a Castlereagh, an Eldon, a Sidmouth; each of these courtiers is indelibly branded. Nothing could be more comically strange or more poetically comic, than the lasting contrast between these modern characters, alike odious and grotesque, and the Greek garments in which they are dressed up, uttering, in the language of gods and Homeric heroes, the most absurd sophistry, the wildest folly; nothing more irresistibly droll than the mingling of the manners and oddities of modern England, of the John Bull of Arbuthnot, with the most graceful and fantastic traditions of ancient mythology.

The present time, which may be called the age of parody, may bow down before Shelley, and acknowledge in him the Shakespeare of the art.

In July, 1820, Shelley was deeply affected by the receipt of sad news. John Keats was dying of consumption at the age of twenty-five. On June 22nd he had broken a blood-vessel, and the end was near.

On hearing this, Shelley wrote to him from Pisa on July 27th, 1820:

MY DEAR KEATS,

I hear with great pain the dangerous accident you have undergone, and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you continue to wear a consumptive appearance. This consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection. I do not think that young and amiable poets are bound to gratify its taste; they have entered into no bond with the Muses to that effect. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about), I think you would do well to pass the winter in Italy and avoid so tremendous an accident, and if you think it as necessary as I do, so long as you continue to find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites with myself in urging the request that you would take up your residence with us. You might come by sea to Leghorn (France is not worth seeing, and the sea is particularly good

for weak lungs), which is within a few miles of us. You ought, at all events, to see Italy, and your health, which I suggest as a motive, may be an excuse to you. I spare declamation about the statues, and paintings, and ruins, and, what is a greater piece of forbearance, about the mountains and streams, the fields, the colours of the sky, and the sky itself.

I have lately read your "Endymion" again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. "Prometheus Unbound," I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. "The Cenci" I hope you have already received—it was studiously composed in a different style. . . . In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism. I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan.

Whether you remain in England, or journey to Italy, believe that you carry with you my anxious wishes for your health, happiness, and success, wherever you are, or whatever you undertake, and that I am,

Yours sincerely,
P. B. SHELLEY.

Keats answered this affectionate invitation as a friend and as a poet:

HAMPSTEAD, *August 10th*, 1820.

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. . . . I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of "The Cenci," as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said,

must have a purpose, which may be the god. An artist must serve Mammon ; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of "Endymion," whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of "Prometheus" every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first flights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain ; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you,

I remain, most sincerely yours,

JOHN KEATS.

It is very touching to see the rival poets thus ingenuously communicating to each other their impressions and their criticisms, and each apparently more anxious for the other's fame than for his own. The fiery ardour of Shelley forbade him to follow the counsels of his laborious and precise friend. He was a worker on an heroic scale, a painter of frescoes—not a carver or a miniature-painter. He did not understand the "Perseus" of Benvenuto Cellini ; according to him the poet or the artist should not work beyond the precise moment of inspiration ; the "polissez et repolissez" of Boileau, and the "slow, dull care" of Keats, seemed to him absurdity. He deemed the patient labour of the file incompatible with strength, naturalness, or effect.

The new collection of poems which Keats had announced, realised to a certain extent the ex-

pectations he had formed on reading "Endymion." Immediately on reading it he wrote to Peacock (November 8th, 1820) :

Among the modern things that have reached me, is a volume of poems by Keats ; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called "Hyperion." I dare say you have not time to read it ; but it is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before.

In his enthusiastic admiration of that wonderful fragment, indignant at the bitter and unjust review of Keats's earlier poems in the *Quarterly Review*, and exaggerating the effect which must be produced on a sensitive and delicate organisation by such hostile criticism, he writes to the editor of the *Review* in which the article appeared, as follows :

The wretch who wrote it has doubtless the additional reward of a consciousness of his motives, besides the thirty guineas a sheet, or whatever it is that you pay him. . . . I am not in the habit of permitting myself to be disturbed by what is said or written of me, though I dare say I may be condemned sometimes justly enough. . . . The case is different with the unfortunate subject of this letter, the author of "Endymion" . . . and . . . if it is Mr. Gifford that I am addressing, I am persuaded that in an appeal to his humanity and justice, he will acknowledge the *jas ab hoste doceri*. . . .

Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of mind by this review, which, I am persuaded, was not written with any intention of producing the effect, to which it has at least greatly contributed, of embittering his existence, and inducing a disease from which there are now but faint hopes of his recovery. The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy ; but I fear that unless his mind can be kept tranquil, little is to be hoped from the mere influence of climate.

But let me not extort anything from your pity. I have just seen a second volume, published by him evidently in careless despair. . . . Allow me to solicit your especial

attention to the fragment of a poem entitled "Hyperion," the composition of which was checked by the Review in question. The great proportion of this piece is surely in the very highest style of poetry.* I speak impartially, for the canons of taste to which Keats has conformed in his other compositions, are the very reverse of my own. I leave you to judge for yourself; it would be an insult to you to suppose that, from motives however honourable, you would lend yourself to a deception of the public.

Shelley, as we see by the foregoing letter, cherished no false hopes concerning Keats's recovery, and it was with no surprise, albeit with keenest sorrow, that a few months later he heard of his death. They had not met again. The author of "Hyperion" died at Rome on February 23rd, 1821, tended by a devoted friend, Mr. Severn, the artist, who watched over him to the last with the truest tenderness. Shelley regretted that he knew of that touching devotion too late to allude to it in the elegy which he consecrated to the memory of his friend. This poem alone, the "Adonais,"† would suffice to render the inseparably linked names of Shelley and Keats immortal. We cannot read it without being deeply moved by the melancholy with which Shelley predicts his own fate, and seems to forebode the impending tragedy which is destined to unite him to his friend.

Towards the end of October, 1820, Shelley

* Byron, who could not forgive Keats for having depreciated Pope, and set himself up as a law-giver in Parnassus while he was as yet but a school-boy poet, and who had bitterly ridiculed him in 1820, made amends for this after the death of the poet. His judgment is inspired by that of Shelley; he declares Keats to have been a genius of great promise, and says that his fragment, "Hyperion," seems to be directly inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as *Æschylus*.

† "Adonais" was not completed until June, 1821.

was driven from the Baths of San Giuliano by an inundation of the canal between the Serchio and the Arno; the water invaded his house, and he returned to Pisa, taking up his winter quarters at Casa Galetti, with Medwin, whom he had not seen since 1813. The latter, after long wanderings, including a voyage to Bombay, where he had bought a copy of "Laon and Cythna" for the price of the paper on which it was printed, had joined his friend in Italy. He has written the most interesting particulars of the literary life of the poet during his residence at Pisa in the winter of 1820-21. He describes him as full of projects of poems, studying Arabic with his cousin, with a view to future travels through Syria and Egypt, delighting more and more in the Greeks and the Spaniards, improvising, for Medwin's benefit, a translation of the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, and luxuriating in the light and perfume of "the golden and starry Autos" of Calderon; purposing to write a version in *terza rima* of Dante's Epic; and reading with admiration Manzoni's "Promessi Sposi." He considered the description of the plague at Milan, to be "far superior to those of De Foe or Thucydides." They also read together Schiller's tragedy of "Joan of Arc." The chief merit of this work in Shelley's eyes was that it treated the Christian religion as a mythology, and he said that a hundred years hence it would be more admired than now.

At times, however, in the midst of these pure delights, Shelley would give way to a dark melancholy, "too sacred," says Medwin, "to notice, and which it would have been a vain attempt to dissipate." At other times, when his features bore the impress of suffering, his spirit was lost in reverie, absorbed in the contemplation of the exterior world, and dissolved, as it were, into Nature.

"More than once," continues Medwin, "I have remarked something of this in Shelley, as we stood watching from my open window in the upper part of the house the sunsets of Pisa, which are gorgeous beyond any I have ever witnessed, when the waters, the sky, and the marble palaces that line the magnificent crescent of the Lung' Arno were glowing with crimson—the river a flood of molten gold—and I seem now to follow its course towards the Ponte al Mare, till the eye rested on the Torre del Fame, that frowned in dark rilievo on the horizon. On such occasions, after one of these reveries, he would forget himself, lost in admiration, and exclaim: 'What a glorious world! There is, after all, something worth living for. This makes me retract the wish that I had never been born.'"

At such times he forgot the bitter thoughts which had made him write: "I am regarded by all who know or hear of me, except, I think, on the whole five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect. This is a large computation, and I don't think I could mention more than three."

Even in Italy his kind fellow-countrymen missed no opportunity of freshly opening the wound. There is a story that at the Pisa Post Office an English officer said to him, "So you are that damned Atheist Shelley?" and struck him with his cane.

The varied and agreeable social relations formed by Shelley during his second residence at Pisa, were some consolation for the contempt and rudeness of his own countrymen. We find him at Casa Galetti surrounded by such clever and noticeable persons as Pacchiani, Emilia Viviani, Mavrocordato, Taaffe (the translator and commentator of Dante), and Sgricci the improvisatore; there for the first time he enjoyed the society of a chosen and select circle which he was so well fitted to appreciate. Two of his most beautiful works, the "*Epipsychidion*" and "*Hellas*," were written under these propitious circumstances.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHELLEY IN ITALY — PISA AND RAVENNA —
EMILIA VIVIANI AND THE "EPIPSYCHIDION" *
—"A DEFENCE OF POETRY"—"HELLAS"—
"CHARLES I."—1821.

ON March 21st, 1821, Shelley wrote to Peacock :
"I have made the acquaintance at Pisa, in an
obscure convent, of the only Italian in whom
I have ever felt any interest."

This was the young and beautiful Contessina
Emilia Viviani, she who inspired the "Epipsy-
chidion." Since the preceding autumn, Shelley
had been intimate with a certain Abbé Pacchiani,
Professor at the University of Pisa and chaplain
in the family of Count Viviani.

Pacchiani was a typical abbé of the eighteenth
century, a fit opponent of Voltaire or Diderot.
Medwin gives us an amusing sketch of the
man :

Pacchiani was about fifty years of age, somewhat above
the common height, with a figure bony and angular, and
covered with no more superfluous flesh than a prize-fighter.
His face was dark as that of a Moor, his features marked
and regular, his eyes black and gloomy. He always re-
minded me of one of Titian's portraits (his family had been
Venetians) stepping out of its frame. Had he lived when
Venice was governed by the Tré, he would have made a
Loredano, and might have sate to Anne Radcliffe for a

Schedoni ; but, to descend to modern times, during the reign of Austrian despotism he was admirably calculated for a spy, or *calderaio*—perhaps he might be one. “*Chi lo sa ?*” Nature certainly never designed him for a divine. As to his religion, it was about on a par with that of Il Abbate Casti (*Casti a non casto*, as *lucus à non lucendo*), of whom he was afterwards a worthy successor, in his native city, Florence. But at Pisa, *Il Signore Professore* was the title by which he was generally known—a professor, like many other professors and lecturers, at least in Italy, who had made a sinecure of his office, that of *belles lettres*, and only mounted the *cathedra* once during the many years that he touched his poor emoluments ; for the Transalpine universities are not quite so richly endowed as our own. Not that this neglect of his duties would have affected his appointment, but, as he told me, he lost it by an irresistible *bon mot*. During one of his midnight orgies, which he was in the habit of celebrating with some of the most dissolute of the students, he was interrogated in the darkness by the patrol in the streets of Pisa, as to who and what he was ; to which questioning he gave the following reply : “*Son’ un uomo publico, in una strada publica, con una donna publica.*” This public avowal cost him his chair. But it gave him *éclat*, and did not lose him his friends, or exclude him from the houses where he was the spiritual guide and confessor. There were, it is true, two reasons why he was tolerated in good society (which Casti says is to be found where he places Don Juan, below)—his pen and his tongue—the dread of both. His epigrams were *sanglantes*, and he gave *sobriquets* the most happy for those who offended him ; as an instance of which, he most happily styled a captain of our Navy *il dolce capitano*—a bye-word that stuck to him through life, and always excited a smile at his expense whenever he appeared. He was a good poet, if one might judge from the quotations he was in the habit of making from his tragedies, which he continually talked about, and which Madame de Staël, who knew him, used to call his *imaginary* ones, for not a line of them was ever published—perhaps written. His talent was conversation—a conversation full of repartee and sparkling with wit ; and his information (he was a man of profound erudition, vast memory, and first-rate talent) made him almost oracular. Shelley, when Pacchiani first became an *habitué* at his house, was charmed with him, and listened with rapt attention to his eloquence, which he compared to that of Coleridge. It was a swarm of ideas singularly extravagant, but which he contrived to weave into his argument with marvellous embroidery. Now he plunged into abysses but to lighten other abysses ; and his words,

like a torrent—for there was no stopping him when fairly rushing onwards—carried all before them.

It was this gift of eloquence that made him for a time welcome at Shelley's, where he passed many an evening in the week (I think I see him now, dissecting the snipes with his long, bony, snuffy fingers—for he never in the operation made use of a knife or fork); at first I say, for he had in the outset sufficient tact (no one knew mankind better) to keep in the background the revolting vices which were familiar to him and disfigured his character. He had a predilection for our *compatriotes*, with and without the *e*, but particularly patronised the *Belle Inglese*, as he always called English women; and after the Italian fashion, soon familiarly called Mrs. Shelley, *La Signora Maria*. Wherever he once got the *entrée*, he was a *sine quâ non*, a *fa tout*. He had always some poor devil of low origin to recommend as a master of his language, receiving, under the rose, part of the lesson money. He was never at a loss to find some *Palazzo* to be let, getting a monthly *douceur* out of the rent from the landlord; for a picture fancier, he had always at hand some mysterious *Marchese* or *Marchesa*, ready to part with a Carlo Dolce, or Andrea del Sarto, or Allori—*originals* of course. He could dilate for hours on the Venus of the Tribune, the Day and Night of Michael Angelo, the Niobé; knew the history of every painter and painting in the galleries of the Uffizii and Pitti better than Vasari, or his successor Rosini; in short, he was a *Mezzano*, *Cicerone*, *Conoscitore*, *Dilettante*, and I might add, *Ruffiano*. Mrs. Shelley has sketched him in her "Valperga."

Some years later, Medwin again met with Pacchiani at Florence. He was reduced to abject poverty, had been imprisoned for debt, but was more than ever a *Diavolo incarnato*.

In the course of conversation with Shelley the abbé mentioned to him two young daughters of the Count, who, on their father's second marriage, had been placed in separate convents. He dwelt principally on the elder, Emilia, who for two years had been in the Convent of St. Anna, awaiting a husband who would take her without dowry.

"Poverina," said Pacchiani, "she pines like a bird in a cage—ardently longs to escape from her prison-house—pines with *ennui*, and wanders about the corridors like an unquiet spirit; she sees her

young days glide on without an aim or purpose—She was made for love. Yesterday she was watering some flowers in her cell—she has nothing to love but her flowers—‘Yes,’ said she, addressing them, ‘you are born to vegetate, but we thinking beings were made for action—not to be penned up in a corner, or set at a window to bloom and die.’”

Such words as these found a responsive echo in Shelley’s heart.

“The next day,” continues Medwin, “accompanied by the priest, we came in sight of the gloomy dark convent, whose ruinous and dilapidated condition told too plainly of confiscation and poverty. It was situated in an unfrequented street in the suburbs, not far from the walls. After passing through a gloomy portal, that led to a quadrangle, the area of which was crowded with crosses, memorials of old monastic times, we were soon in the presence of Emilia. . . .

Emilia was indeed lovely and interesting. Her profuse black hair, tied in the most simple knot, after the manner of a Greek Muse in the Florence gallery, displayed to its full height her brow, fair as that marble of which I speak. She was also about the same height as the antique. Her features possessed a rare faultlessness, and almost Grecian contour, the nose and forehead making a straight line . . . her eyes had the sleepy voluptuousness, if not the colour of Beatrice Cenci’s. They had indeed no definite colour, changing with the changing feeling to dark or light as the soul animated them. Her cheek was pale too as marble, owing to her confinement and want of air, and perhaps to thought.

There was a lark in the *parloir* that had lately been caught. “Poor prisoner!” said she, looking at it compassionately, “you will die of grief! How I pity thee! What must thou suffer when thou hearest in the clouds the songs of thy parent birds, or some flocks of thy kind on the wing, in search of other skies, of new fields, of new delights! But, like me, thou wilt be forced to remain here always, to wear out thy miserable existence here. Why can I not release thee? . . .”

Such was the impression of the only visit I paid Emilia; but I saw her some weeks after, at the end of a Carnival, when she had obtained leave to visit Mrs. Shelley, companioned by the abbess. In spite of the Contessina’s efforts to assume cheerfulness, one might see she was very, very sad; but she made no complaint. She had grown used to suffering; it had become her element.

Claire and Mary frequently visited her at the convent, and lent her books, such as "Corinne," "La Nouvelle Héloïse," etc. Claire began to teach her English. Shelley often wrote to her, and together with gifts of flowers wet with her tears,* received from her in answer letters full of melancholy and despair. While Mary was for Emilia her "dearest sister," Shelley became the "beloved brother," the "*sensibile* Percy," the "*adorato sposo*."

On one occasion she writes to him as follows :

This evening I wish to tell you many things, but my vigilant and importunate *Argus* has hindered me from so doing. I will now tell you a part of them. You console me by engaging yourself to effect my liberation. Here I fare ill, both in spirits and health, and suffer very much in every way, so that by taking me from here you would give me a new existence. I leave the *how* to you, who have that experience and that wisdom in which I am wanting. . . . Ah, God pardon my mother! She could make me contented, if not happy, and, on the contrary, it is she who is the chief cause of my misfortunes. I love her still, and wish her every good. I feel that Nature speaks and lives in my heart. Although she forgets that she is my mother, I remember that I am her daughter. . . . You say that my liberation will perhaps *divide* us. O my friend! my soul, my heart can never be parted from my brother, from my dear sisters! My person, once delivered from this prison, will attempt all things in order to follow my heart, and Emilia will seek you everywhere, even to the utmost boundaries of the world. I do not love, nor shall I ever be able to love, any thing or person so much as your family; for it I would abandon everything, and should lose nothing, since in it are included all that can exist of beautiful, virtuous, amiable, *sensibile*, and learned in the world.

Shelley was attracted to Emilia, not only by her sorrows and her beauty, but still more by her charms of intellect and the ideal tendencies of her mind. "She had cultivated her mind,"

* See the exquisite madrigal beginning: "Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me, sweet basil and mig-nonnette?"

he says, "more than any Italian woman I have met." She read the Italian poets, was herself a writer of verse, and, although ignorant of Plato, had written an "Apostrophe to Love" that has come down to us, and bears witness to her elevation and purity of thought on that subject. This possibly may have given Shelley the first idea of his "Epipsychidion;" and from Emilia he borrowed the words of his epigraph, which is the key to the poem: "L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell' infinito un mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro" (the loving soul soars above the visible world, and creates for herself in infinite space a world all her own, and unlike indeed to this dark and dreadful prison).

To see more than a pure Platonic affection in the friendship between Shelley and Emilia, would be wilfully to shut one's eyes against evidence. Mary is too closely interwoven in the "Epipsychidion," as sister to Emilia, for us to suppose for an instant that she could have any cause for jealousy. Shelley himself dismissed any such interpretation of his conduct with contempt. On October 22nd he wrote to J. Gisborne: "The 'Epipsychidion' is a mystery; as to real flesh and blood, you know that I do not deal in those articles; you might as well go to a gin-shop for a leg of mutton, as expect anything human or earthly from me. . . . Some of us have, in a prior existence, been in love with an Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie. . . . I desired Ollier not to circulate this piece except to the initiated (*συνετοί*), and even they, it seems, are inclined to approximate me to the circle of a servant-girl and her sweetheart. But I intend to write a symposium of my own to set all this right." A little later, in 1822, when his passion

for Emilia had passed away, and when, too, that part of himself which is expressed in the "Epipsychidion" had passed away also, he wrote to Gisborne:

The "Epipsychidion" I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the Centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealised history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error—and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it—consists of seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal.

There can be no mistake, the "Epipsychidion" is to its author merely the history of disappointment in his search for ideal beauty, of which he has caught a glimpse in the created beauty that has at various times detained him in his flight towards the uncreated and the eternal.

In Shelley, love, as an emotion of the soul, cannot be satisfied with one object only; everything beautiful in Art, in Nature, in humanity, and especially in woman, is his own; he loves a woman as he loves the sun, the cloud, the song of the lark or nightingale, the "Niobe" or the "Apollo," the "Antigone" of Sophocles, or the "Two Heavenly Lovers" of Calderon. From Harriet Grove to Emilia Viviani, that which he sings of with rapture, is Love itself; his only Muse, his one God. In order to appreciate the "Epipsychidion," it must be read in the same spirit as the "Vita Nuova" of Dante, or Shakespeare's Sonnets.

The romance of Emilia ends for Shelley as other romances had ended. We have seen the estimation in which he held her, so soon as the commonplace realities of life robbed him of the gracious phantom of his own fascinated imagination.

Mary writes to Mrs. Gisborne on March 7th, 1822 :

Emilia has married Biondi ; we hear that she leads him and his mother (to use a vulgarism) a devil of a life. The conclusion of our friendship (*a la Italiana*) puts me in mind of a nursery rhyme which runs thus :

As I was going down Cranbourne Lane,
 Cranbourne Lane was dirty,
 And there I met a pretty maid
 Who dropt to me a curtsey.
 I gave her cakes, I gave her wine,
 I gave her sugar-candy ;
 But oh ! the little naughty girl,
 She asked me for some brandy.

Now turn "Cranbourne Lane" into Pisan acquaintances, which I am sure are dirty enough, and "brandy" into that wherewithal to buy brandy (and that no small sum *però*), and you have the whole story of Shelley's Italian Platonics.

Emilia Viviani came to a sad and gloomy end. Medwin thus describes her last days ; he had come across Pacchiani several years afterwards in Florence, who one day said to him mysteriously :

"I will introduce you to an old friend—come with me," and he conducted me to a country house in the suburbs. The villa was in great disrepair. The court leading to it, overgrown with weeds, proved that it had been for some years untenanted. An old woman led us through a number of long passages and rooms, many of the windows in which were broken, and let in the cold blasts from "the wind-swept Apennines ;" and opening at length a door, ushered us into a chamber, where a small bed and a couple of chairs formed the entire furniture. The couch was covered with white gauze curtains to exclude the gnats ; behind them was lying a female form. She immediately recognised me—was probably prepared for my visit—and extended her thin hand to me in greeting. So changed that recumbent figure, that I could scarcely recognise a trace of the once beautiful Emilia. Shelley's evil augury had been fulfilled, she had found in her marriage all that he had predicted ; for six years she led a life of purgatory, and had at length broken the chain with the consent of her father, who had

lent her this long disused and dilapidated *campagne*. I might fill many a page by speaking of the tears she shed over the memory of Shelley—but enough—she did not long enjoy her freedom. Shortly after this interview she was confined to her bed; the seeds of *malaria*, which had been sown in the Maremma, combined with that all-irremediable malady, broken-heartedness, brought on a rapid consumption.

The old woman, who had been her nurse, made me a long narration of her last moments, as she wept bitterly. I wept too when I thought of Shelley's Psyche, and his "Epipsychidion."

Happily for Shelley, amid all such disappointments in Platonic love, "his mistress Urania," as he named poetical inspiration, remained true to him.

A pamphlet by his friend Peacock gave him an opportunity of breaking a lance in her honour early in 1821.

Peacock's article, which appeared in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany*, 1820, was a clever attack on poetry and poets. He gave a rapid sketch of "The Four Ages of Poetry," the age of iron, the age of gold, the age of silver, and the age of brass, which recur in regular succession from the times of Homer to those of Nonnus, and from the times of the Troubadours to those of Wordsworth. He maintained that the poetry of primitive ages (periods during which there are—if we except the priesthood, which always flourishes—only three flourishing trades: those of the king, the thief, and the beggar) was but the hyperbolical panegyric of the exploits and wealth of a restricted number of predominant individuals. The strongest part of the pamphlet was its satire on the modern age of brass—that is, on the contemporary poets, or the Lake School, or "Returners to Nature," as he amusingly dubs them.

The conclusion drawn by Peacock was that poetry is suitable to the childhood of nations, but is not fit for their maturity, and that to treat it

seriously is as absurd as for a grown man to rub his gums with a coral, or to be hushed to sleep with the tinkle of silver bells. He made no exception even for moral poetry, which consists, he says, in tearful and egoistical rhapsodies, expressive of the writer's extreme dislike of the world and all it contains.

Such a satire moved Shelley to both indignation and amusement. While sharing to a certain extent Peacock's criticisms on the Bavi and Mævi of the day, he could not admit that poetry herself was responsible for the rhymes of Barry Cornwall, "this stuff in *terza*, *ottava*, and *trémillesima rima*," whose earthly baseness had drawn down the lightning of his friend's indiscriminating censure "upon the temple of immortal song" itself.

"Your anathemas against poetry itself," writes Shelley (February 15th, 1821), "excited me to a sacred rage, or *caloëthes** *scribendi* of vindicating the insulted Muses. I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you within the lists of a magazine, in honour of my mistress, Urania; but God willed that I should be too lazy, and wrested the victory from your hope; since first having unhorsed poetry, and the universal sense of the wisest in all ages, an easy conquest would have remained to you in me, the knight of the shield of shadow and the lance of gossamere. Besides, I was at that moment reading Plato's 'Ion,' which I recommend you to reconsider."

An attack of ophthalmia prevented Shelley from immediately setting to work; but by the month of March, 1821, he had completed the first part of his admirable "Defence of Poetry," which may justly be described as "the song of the swan."

Another lady besides Emilia soon appeared at Pisa to exercise a powerful charm over the poet.

In the beginning of 1821, Shelley made the acquaintance of Edward Williams and his wife.

* *Caloëthes*, the *contrary* of *cacoëthes*, Dowden explains.

The young couple had come direct from Geneva to Italy for the express purpose of knowing Shelley personally; Medwin having described him as a most marvellous phenomenon. Edward Williams was the descendant of one of Cromwell's daughters, and had been a schoolfellow of Shelley at Eton; he had served in the navy, and had subsequently travelled in India with Medwin. He was frank, loyal, generous, brave, passionately fond of the sea and of navigation, something of a poet, possessed real dramatic talent,* and was therefore well adapted to win Shelley's affection. Mrs. Williams realised the feminine ideal he had essayed to describe in the "Sensitive Plant." Her sweet and simple nature, the elegance of her movements, and her gracious manners compensated in Shelley's eyes for any want of literary culture, while her proficiency in music, her harp and guitar playing were a new and hitherto unknown delight to Shelley. He had hardly known her an hour when he loved her. In several exquisite little poems† he has expressed his tender affection for this lady; he compares her to Miranda, and elects himself to be her Ariel. Thenceforth Shelley and Williams were never parted, not even in death.

Among the most frequent guests at the Casa Aulla, was a personage who interested Shelley in more ways than one, but more especially because he represented the sacred cause of freedom for the poet's true mother-country, Greece. He writes to Peacock, on the 21st March, 1821:

We have made a very interesting acquaintance with a

* Shelley wrote an epithalamium, to be set to music, for one of his plays on a subject from Boccaccio.

† See "Lines to Edward Williams," "The Magnetic Lady to her Patient," "To Jane—The Invitation," "To Jane—The Recollection," "With a Guitar, to Jane," "To Jane."

Greek Prince, perfectly acquainted with ancient literature, and full of enthusiasm for the liberties and improvement of his country. Mary has been a Greek student for several months, and is reading "Antigone" with our turbaned friend, who, in return, is taught English.

This turbaned friend was Prince Mavrocordato, one of the survivors of the Wallachian insurrection, who had taken refuge in Italy. It was a piece of good fortune for the exiled Greek, and for the cause of Hellenic independence, to meet the poet who was about to take the interests of awakening Greece so warmly to heart, and to sing with heroic enthusiasm and prophetic inspiration, the defeat of the Crescent and the triumph of Hellas.

Shelley knew little of the modern Greeks, except from the historical novel of "Anastasius;"* he saw in them only the heirs of the Hellenic name and glory, "the descendants of the nation to which we owe our civilisation." He believed that, though degraded by misfortune and slavery, their natural characteristics were a pledge of the future, and doubted not that a change in the political situation would bring about their complete regeneration.

All public attention is now centred on the wonderful revolution in Greece. I dare not, after the events of last winter, hope that slaves can become freemen so cheaply; yet I know one Greek of the highest qualities, both of courage and conduct—the Prince Mavrocordato—and if the rest be like him, all will go well.

Some months later he was at Leghorn with his friend Trelawney, who took him over the docks, where men of all the nations of the world were congregated together, and showed him the

* "Anastasius; or, Memoirs of a Greek," written at the end of the eighteenth century. Three vols., 1819; by Thomas Hope.

modern Greeks he had just glorified in his "Hellas."

"I hear their shrill nasal voices," said Trelawney, as they approached the Greek vessel they were about to visit, "and should like to know if you can trace in the language or lineaments of these Greeks of the nineteenth century A.D., the faintest resemblance to the lofty and sublime spirits who lived in the fourth century B.C. An English merchant who has dealings with them, told me he thought these modern Greeks were, if judged by their actions, a cross between the Jews and the Gipsies."

Shelley and Trelawney, while thus conversing had ascended the *San-Spiridione*, where they found the Greeks huddled in little groups on the bridge, shouting, gesticulating, smoking, eating and playing, like savages. "Does this realise your idea of Hellenism?" asked Trelawney. "No, but it does of Hell," answered Shelley. Still worse was it when he heard Captain Zarita speak; the latter offered them pipes and coffee in his cabin—under a niche with an image of St. Spiridion, before which a lamp burned—and told them he disapproved of war because it interrupted trade. "Come away," said Shelley; "there is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come away!"

It was not possible to Shelley to move among the realities of life without the infliction of constant pain on his own ideal; and he withdrew from the world principally with the object of avoiding a contact involving disenchantment. It may be that we should never have possessed "Hellas," had Shelley spoken with Captain Zarita a few months earlier.

The companionship of Prince Mavrocordato awoke in him all his Greek sympathies. The Prince communicated to him in April the pro-

clamation just issued by his cousin Ypsilanti; on that day Shelley conceived "Hellas," and ordered two seals to be engraved with the device of a dove with outspread wings surrounded by this motto: "*Μάντις εἰμ ἔρθλῶν ἀγώνων.*" The same motto became the epigraph of the drama.

It was fitting that Shelley's last complete work should be a hymn in honour of liberty and of the glorious country of Homer, Æschylus, and Plato. But his enthusiasm for the past did not prevent him from taking a clear view of European politics, and of the action of the great Powers in a conflict involving the destinies of the world. He severely blamed the interested and selfish policy of England; and indicated the only proper course to be taken by a nation regardful of the rights of peoples and of her own dignity: this should be to support the independence of Greece, instead of incurring the indelible stain of a monstrous alliance "with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity, and of civilisation."

One cannot read "Hellas" without being struck with its likeness to the "Persæ" of Æschylus. The dramatic interest is equally simple, grand, and terrible in both. The coming of successive messengers of evil, the evocation of Mahomet II. by Ahasuerus, the despair of Mahmud, the admirable contrast between the choruses of Greek and Turkish slaves—these almost transport us to the stage of Athens. But there is a moral and philosophical atmosphere in Shelley's drama which we do not find in Æschylus, lifting it far above the actual facts on which it is grounded; there is an inspired presentiment of the final triumph of the Hellenic or Promethean spirit over all religious fanaticism and social tyranny. By a marvellous stroke of genius he makes Mahmud himself the mouth-

piece of this prophecy ; and in Mahmud is incarnate not only the melancholy belonging to the decline of a great but decaying power, but the deeper and more human melancholy of a mind awakened by adversity to great thoughts on the fragility of human things, and to the revelations of the ever-present, ever-subsisting spirit personified in Ahasuerus.

There is a strange grandeur in this mixture of the real and the ideal, of history and vision, which lifts us far above the narrow scene of action, to the remotest spheres of thought and imagination. All through "*Hellas*" we feel ourselves in presence of a still higher and vaster conception, which the poet had at first intended to realise, but which he relinquished in order to strike the popular imagination quickly and forcibly. Though "*Hellas*" did not obtain its rightful meed of fame in London, the poet, had he lived, would have been consoled for the injustice of his fellow-countrymen, by its effect on Lord Byron. "It is impossible to express," says Medwin, "the influence exercised on Byron by that drama, and by Shelley's enthusiasm, when he resolved to devote himself to the cause of Greece." Shelley needed keen intellectual excitement to counteract the moral and physical exhaustion induced at intervals by ill-health and financial difficulties. But the return of fine weather, and the delight of boating, contributed to his rapid restoration. He had now a boat of his own, a boat that held three persons, "a little nautilus-shell," he called it, with which he navigated the rushing Arno, or the Serchio, to the great alarm of Italian onlookers.

This period of tranquillity was only broken by an excursion to Florence, and a short visit to Lord Byron, at Ravenna, in August.

Shelley found him transformed by his passion

for the Countess Guiccioli, which had rescued him from the wretched excesses into which he had fallen through pride and indifference rather than from choice, in excellent health, and immersed in politics and literature.

Shelley had barely arrived when Byron hastened to communicate to him a monstrous and shameful story that had been told him by the Hoppners, and which out of hatred to Claire, his former mistress, he was not unwilling to believe. Claire was said to have been Shelley's mistress while at Naples, and to have borne him a child which he had sent to the Foundling Hospital. The authors of the calumny were Shelley's former servants, Elise and Paolo, who thus revenged themselves for their dismissal. Shelley was greatly hurt to think that his highly valued friends the Hoppners could for a moment have believed so shameful a story. He begged his wife to write to the Hoppners, refuting the charge which she "only can effectually rebut." Mary at once wrote as Shelley asked her, a letter full of the most eloquent indignation, as well as the deepest affection for her husband :

That my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds—he, the gentlest and most humane of creatures—is more painful to me, oh, far more painful than words can express! Need I say that the union between my husband and myself has ever been undisturbed? Love caused our first imprudence; love which, improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost two children?), has increased daily and knows no bounds.

Shelley handed this letter to Lord Byron, who undertook to forward it to the Hoppners with comments of his own; but he failed to do so, and the letter was found among Byron's papers after his death.

Very different was Shelley's zeal for and in all

that concerned his friend. La Guiccioli was desirous of removing to Switzerland in order to extricate herself from the difficulties of her position in Italy, and Shelley, at Byron's request, tasked himself to write her a long letter in Italian advising her to stay where she was; "an odd thing enough for an utter stranger to write on subjects of the utmost delicacy to his friend's mistress," he writes to Mary. "But it seems destined that I am always to have some active part in everybody's affairs whom I approach. I have set down in lame Italian, the strongest reasons I can think of against the Swiss emigration. To tell you the truth, I should be very glad to accept as my fee, his establishment in Tuscany."

Shelley's "lame Italian" was eloquent enough to detain the Countess in Italy, and as a reward for her docility she asks of him a favour: "Do not leave Ravenna without Milord." It was arranged that Byron should join Shelley at Pisa.

During Shelley's stay at Ravenna he visited the curious antiquities of that ancient city, and "looked with a certain interest at the tomb of Theodoric and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia;" but cared little for the beauty of its mosaics and symbolic sculptures. He wandered through the gloomy pine-forest that separates Ravenna from the sea, wherein Dante meditated, and Byron, at the request of La Guiccioli, composed his "Prophecy of Dante." Nor did he neglect the tomb of the great Ghibeline. "I have seen Dante's tomb," he writes to Mary, "and worshipped the sacred spot."

But more than aught else at Ravenna, Lord Byron himself and the progress of his genius was interesting to Shelley.

He has read to me one of the unpublished cantos of "Don Juan," which is astonishingly fine. It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day—every word has the stamp of immortality. I despair of rivalling Lord Byron—as

well I may—and there is no other with whom it is worth contending. This canto (5th) is totally in the style, and sustained with incredible ease and power, of the end of the second canto. There is not a word which the most rigid asserter of the dignity of human nature could desire to be cancelled. It fulfils, in a certain degree, what I have long preached of producing—something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful. It may be vanity, but I think I see the trace of my earnest exhortations to him to create something wholly new.

The unreserved admiration felt by Shelley for Byron, discouraged him, perhaps, more than any other cause from writing. He was bitten by the desire for fame.

"I write nothing," he tells Peacock, "and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. . . . I had rather be nothing. . . . And the accursed cause to the downfall of which I dedicated what powers I may have had—flourishes like a cedar, and covers England with its boughs. My motive was never the infirm desire of fame; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. The cup is justly given to one only of an age; indeed, participation would make it worthless; and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not."

Yet although Shelley thus allowed himself to be dazzled by the splendour of Byron's genius, he felt that there lay between them an abyss that the most sincere admiration could not bridge. Byron's selfishness and pride closed all the avenues of his heart. And with deep melancholy Shelley says:

Lord Byron and I are excellent friends, and were I reduced to poverty, or were I a writer who had no claims to a higher station than I possess—or did I possess a higher than I deserve—we should appear in all things as such, and I would freely ask him any favour. Such is not now the case. The demon of mistrust and pride lurks between two persons in our situation, poisoning the freedom of our intercourse. This is a tax, and a heavy one, which we must pay for being human. I think the fault is not on my side, nor is it likely, I being the weaker. I hope that in the next world these things will be better managed. What is passing in the heart of another rarely escapes the observation of one who is a strict anatomist of his own.

So just an appreciation of Byron's character, and of the moral obstacles to perfect friendship with him, was due in great measure to the reserve which Shelley had found to be necessary with regard to his friend Leigh Hunt, for whose benefit he had endeavoured, while staying at Ravenna, to promote with Byron's help a periodical to be called *The Liberal*. With Hunt he could speak openly, and in his disappointment at not finding Byron so generous and unselfish as himself he wrote to him as follows :

Particular circumstances, or rather, I should say, particular dispositions in Lord Byron's character, render the close and exclusive intimacy with him in which I find myself intolerable to me. Thus much, my best friend, I will confess and confide to you. No feelings of my own shall injure or interfere with what is now nearest to them—your interest ; and I will take care to preserve the little influence I may have over this Proteus in whom such strange extremes are reconciled.

On October 25th, Shelley left the Baths of San Giuliano, in order to join the Williamses at Pisa, where he expected Byron. Immediately on arriving, he hired a spacious palazzo, and had it put in readiness for the noble poet. The building, it was said, was partly constructed after designs by Michael Angelo, and was called the Palazzo Lanfranchi ; on its front, above a chain such as was worn by captives, were the words "Alla Giornata." La Guiccioli had arrived at Pisa before Byron, and was accompanied by her father and brother ; "the lion's jackals," as Shelley called them. Shelley's own residence was on the Lung' Arno ; he had taken a few rooms on the upper floor of the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, from which there was a view of the country and the sea.*

* So says Dowden, but Rabbe says a view "of the town and its environs." Dowden says expressly, "*avoiding the ill odours of the town,*" etc.

There, among his books, and the clustering plants* he loved to cultivate, and which "for him changed sunny winter into spring," he resumed his tragedy of "Charles I.," which he purposed to make a still more artistic achievement than "The Cenci." Unfortunately, it was never completed. Some considerable fragments, however, remain—entire scenes, truly Shakespearian in spirit. If we may trust Medwin, Shelley threw aside his work from a feeling of disgust, similar to that which prevented Michael Angelo from completing the bust of Brutus in the Florence Gallery, "disgust at treason." He could not forgive the murderers of Charles I., and shrank from painting the hypocritical tyrant Cromwell as a hero.

In Byron's company, Shelley forgot his grievances and his reserve, and abandoned himself to the fascination of a poet whose very faults were attractive, and whose brilliant and paradoxical conversation amused him, and brought his own qualities into play.

The two friends rarely passed a day without meeting, or practising pistol shooting.

A very interesting volume might be made of Shelley's and Byron's conversations as recounted by Medwin and Trelawney. The opposite characters of the two poets are shown in striking contrast: the one, skipping from subject to subject, touching the surface only, with light banter and love of mystification (Shelley compared him in this to Voltaire); the other, serious and earnest, oracular in speech, and following with contagious warmth and the most persuasive sincerity the sublime leadings of his imagination, or the subtlest turns of the argument; yet able to pass, like Raffaëlle, when occasion served, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." Byron read every

* See his poem entitled "Zucca."

day to Shelley what he had composed during the night: either "Cain," that apocalyptic vision and new revelation to humanity, or "Heaven and Earth," one of his most polished productions (Shelley loved to declaim the choruses of this work, deeming them models of the lyrical style), or "The Deformed Transformed," which of all Byron's works Shelley liked the least. It is said that Byron, enraged at his criticisms, threw the manuscript into the fire; but if so, the poem rose again from its ashes.

The merits of poets, ancient and modern, were warmly discussed; Shelley enthusiastically defending his favourite poets Dante and Shakespeare from Byron's narrow and contemptuous criticism. The dangerous subjects of philosophy and religious metaphysics were often touched upon; Byron took pleasure in rousing the irritable susceptibility of his friend "the Snake," as he called him, on these points, laughing in his sleeve at the straightforward sincerity of his convictions.

One day in December, 1821, Shelley was informed that a man at Lucca had been condemned to be burnt alive for the crime of sacrilege. "The Spanish woman," as Byron calls her, "who has her petticoats thrown over Lucca, has just condemned a poor devil to the stake for stealing a wafer-box out of a church. Shelley and I were up in arms against this act of piety, and are disturbing everybody to get the sentence changed." In the first burst of indignation, Shelley proposed that Byron, Medwin, and he should rescue the offender at the moment of execution and place him in safety beyond the Tuscan frontier. Byron, less ardent, but more practical, suggested the more prudent proceeding of *representations*. Shelley accordingly wrote on the subject to Lord Guilford, the English Minister at Florence, and prepared a memorial

to the Grand Duke. But Lord Guilford's intervention was effectual, and on December 13th Shelley wrote to Lord Byron:

"I hear this morning that the design . . . of burning my fellow-serpent has been abandoned, and that he has been condemned to the galleys."

Shelley had missed a grand opportunity of overturning the idols of the false gods, of extinguishing the flames, and of exclaiming with the hero of "The Revolt of Islam":

"I am Laon!"

CHAPTER XX.

SHELLEY AT PISA AND AT CASA MAGNI—HIS
DEATH AND FUNERAL PYRE—"THE TRIUMPH
OF LIFE"—1822.

THE opening of the year 1822 had added to the little English colony at Pisa a new member who very soon became one of Shelley's most devoted friends and fervent admirers. This was Edward John Trelawney. He was of a chivalrous and adventurous nature; noble and generous; ardent in his admiration of Shelley's intellect and character; and holding him far superior to Byron, he became a constant guest at Shelley's rooms during this the last year of his life, and the most disinterested and faithful of his biographers.*

"A kind of half-Arab Englishman," says Mrs. Shelley, "whose life has been as changeful as that of Anastasius, and who recounts the adventures of his youth as eloquently and well as the imagined Greek. . . . He is six feet high; raven-black hair, which curls thickly and shortly like a Moor's; dark-gray expressive eyes; overhanging brows; upturned lips, and a smile which expresses good-nature and kind-heartedness. . . . his language, as he relates the events of his life, energetic and simple, whether the tale be one of blood and horror or of irresistible comedy. His company is delightful, for he excites me to think."

* "Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author." London, 1878.

Shelley and his friends thought of writing a play, or at the least a novel, founded on his adventurous life. In the "Fragments of an Unfinished Drama," we have Trelawney idealised in the character of the Pirate.

Trelawney gives a most amusing account of his first interview with Shelley :

It was late when I arrived at Pisa, and after dining I hurried to the Tre Palazzi on the Lung' Arno, where the Shelleys and Williamses lived in the same house. The Williamses received me in their earnest, cordial manner. We had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway she laughingly said: "Come in, Shelley; it's only our friend Tre just arrived." Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe—as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face—that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies, he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment. Was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax.

It is difficult for the present generation even to conceive the acrid bigotry of fifty years ago.

He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers which he seemed to have outgrown. . . . Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? "Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*. I am translating some passages in it." "Oh! read it to us!" Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The

masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality, I no longer doubted his identity. A dead silence ensued. Looking up, I asked: "Where is he?" Mrs. Williams said: "Who? Shelley? Oh! he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where."

At the end of 1821, Shelley and Williams had conceived the idea of building a boat according to a model the latter had brought with him from England. Trelawney was consulted, and proposed an American schooner; but Shelley and Williams persisted in their plan, and the construction of the boat was entrusted to Captain Roberts, a friend of Trelawney's at Genoa. The three friends had discussed it during the night of Jan. 15th, 1822. "Thus on that night," wrote Mrs. Shelley at a later period, "one of gaiety and thoughtlessness—Jane's and my miserable destiny was decided. We then said, laughing each to the other: 'Our husbands decide without asking our consent, or having our concurrence; for to tell you the truth, I hate this boat, though I say nothing.' Said Jane: 'So do I; but speaking would be useless and only spoil their pleasure!' How well I remember that night! How short-sighted we are! And now that its anniversary is come and gone, methinks I cannot be the wretch I too truly am."

While waiting the arrival of the fatal boat, Shelley spent his leisure hours in translating from Calderon and Goethe;* he considered the *Magico Prodigioso* and *Faust* to be wonderfully alike,

* He found Calderon far less difficult to translate than Goethe; "only Coleridge," he said modestly, "is capable of translating Goethe." *Faust* has, since that time, been frequently translated into French, but never so well as by M. Camille Benoit in a book just published by Lemerre.

though he admitted the different genius of the two authors. Goethe seemed to him the greater philosopher and Calderon the greater poet.

Two vexatious incidents occurred in March to disturb the calm current of their life at Pisa.

The ground-floor of the building in which the Shelleys dwelt was used on Sundays as an Evangelical chapel, and Mary, out of compliance with public opinion, was occasionally present at the services and sermons. Dr. Nott, the learned editor of the poems of Surrey and Wyatt, was the preacher. On Sunday, March 3rd, Mary received a special invitation requesting her presence, and that morning's discourse consisted of an attack on Atheism, with several direct allusions to Mrs. Shelley, intended to warn her against the baleful influence of her husband's doctrines. The gossips and scandal-mongers were delighted—but Mary bitterly regretted having visited the *piano di sotto*, and longed for the sea-girt isle of which Shelley, sick of the wickedness of men, had spoken to her in his letters from Ravenna.

On another Sunday, March 24th, Byron, Shelley, Count Pietro Gamba, Captain Hay, and Taaffe, the translator of Dante, were returning from their evening ride, when a half-drunken dragoon rode through the midst of the group, jostling against the commentator of the "Divina Commedia." Byron and Shelley set off in pursuit of the ruffian, stopped him, demanded his name and address, and gave him their cards. Sergeant-Major Masi called to the guard, and began slashing right and left with his sword. Shelley was knocked off his horse, and would have been struck, but for the intervention of Captain Hay. Masi fled, and was severely wounded by one of Byron's *sbirri* ("I have some rough fellows in my service," he used to say), and taken to the hospital. This adventure made a great sensation at Pisa, and occasioned

the most absurd rumours. At a later period it served the Government as one pretext among others for exiling Count Pietro Gamba.

These untoward incidents, which were made more annoying through their exaggeration, determined Shelley on removing from Pisa, and seeking a retired spot far from the tongue of gossip and small scandals; he was further impelled to this course by a desire to break off his superficial intimacy with Byron. He had visited the shores of the Bay of Spezzia a few months before, and had discovered a deserted building, Casa Magni, situated in melancholy solitude between the villages of Lerici and San Terenzo. It was a house of dull and severe aspect, built on cloister-like arches, which gave it the appearance of a convent, sheltered behind by a hill covered with dark forest trees, and overlooking the sea, which washed the very walls of the terrace. "The natives were even wilder than the place. Many a night they passed on the beach singing or rather howling; the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet."

It was in trembling, and with a kind of dumb terror full of forebodings of evil, that Mary took possession of the lonely and comfortless house. "We might have been wrecked," she says, "on one of the South Sea Islands, and have felt no farther from all civilisation; yet where there is sunshine, comfort becomes luxury, and our own society suffices us."

Shelley's delight was now perfect; he had almost found his solitary isle, and writes to his friend Smith: "As to me, like Anacreon's swallow, I have left my Nile, and have taken up my summer quarters here, in a lonely house close by the sea-side, surrounded by the soft and sublime scenery of the Gulf of Spezzia."

On May 12th, the fatal boat arrived. The

inhabitants of Casa Magni were walking after dinner on the terrace when they descried a strange sail rounding the point of Porto Venere; it was the *Don Juan*, as Byron had christened her—a name soon changed by Shelley for that of the *Ariel*.

The enthusiastic poet insisted on trying her the very next day, eagerly seeking opportunities of matching her against the feluccas and other big craft in the bay. Williams, in his curious journal full of Shelley-worship, gives a detailed account of their daily adventurous expeditions to every point on the coast of Spezzia. Their feelings resembled those of Christopher Columbus when discovering the New World.

Our two sailors were in ecstasies over their boat; Williams as jealous of the *Ariel's* reputation as of his wife's; they could not tear themselves away from their plaything, and the Mediterranean soon seemed "too small and calm a lake on which to display her excellence." They dismissed the Genoese sailor engaged by Trelawney, retaining only an inexperienced lad, named Charles Vivian. Williams, who knew something of the sea, instructed Shelley how to handle a boat, "with as much anxiety," says the latter, "as a sparrow's over her cuckoo young."

"It was great fun," writes Trelawney, "to witness Williams teaching the poet how to steer, and other points of seamanship. As usual, Shelley had a book in his hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical. . . . The boat on one occasion getting, as sailors express it, 'in irons,' Shelley's hat was knocked overboard, and he would probably have followed, if I had not held him. He was so uncommonly awkward, that when they had things ship-shape, Williams, somewhat scandalised at the lubberly manœuvre, blew up the poet for his neglect and inattention to orders. Shelley was, however, so happy, and in such high glee, and the nautical terms so tickled his fancy, that he even put his beloved 'Plato' in his pocket, and gave his

mind up to fun and frolic. 'You will do no good with Shelley,' I said, 'until you heave his books and papers overboard ; shear the wisps of hair that hang over his eyes ; and plunge his arms up to the elbows in a tar-bucket.' Shelley was often quite heedless of the boat, so intent was he on catching images from the ever-changing sea and sky."

As the *Ariel* drew too much water to near the shore, Williams, with the help of a carpenter, had constructed a very small boat, of reeds and tarred canvas, flat-bottomed, and so light as to be easily carried by one person from the house to the shore. This fragile toy delighted the poet ; the slightest movement caused her to capsize, and more than once Shelley was in real danger. But he attributed this to the boat's unsteadiness, rather than to any imprudence of his own. "I see," he said, "why ships and boats are of the feminine gender ; it is because they are as perfidious as women." On this subject, Trelawney relates two anecdotes too characteristic to be omitted :

On a calm sultry evening, Jane was sitting on the sands before the villa, on the margin of the sea, with her two infants, and watching for her husband—he was becalmed in the offing, awaiting the sea-breeze. Shelley came from the house, dragging the skiff ; after launching her, he said to Jane : "The sand and air are hot ; let us float on the cool, calm sea ; there is room, with careful stowage, for us all in my barge." His flashing eyes and vehement, eager manner determined on the instant execution of any project that took his fancy, however perilous. . . . So Jane impulsively and promptly squatted in the bottom of the frail bark with her babies. She understood that Shelley intended to float on the water near the shore, where the sea is very shallow. A puff of wind, a ripple on the water, an incautious movement, and the tub of a thing must cant over. The poet presently, proud of his freight, triumphantly shoved off from the shore, and, to exhibit his skill as a mariner, rowed round a jutting promontory into deep blue water. There was no eye watching them, no boat within a mile, the shore fast receding, the water deepening, and the poet dreaming. As these dismal facts flashed on Jane's mind, her insane folly in trusting herself to a man of genius, but devoid of judgment, prudence, or skill, dismayed her. After pulling

out a long way, the poet rested on his oars, unconscious of her fears, and apparently of where he was, absorbed in a deep reverie. . . . Spellbound with terror, Jane kept her eyes on the awful boatman, lost in his sombre melancholy. She made several remarks, but they met with no response.

Suddenly he raised his head ; his brow cleared, and his face brightened as with a bright thought, and he exclaimed joyfully : " Now let us together solve the great mystery." Jane, understanding the danger she would run did she remain silent, or too brusquely rouse the poet from his ecstasy, answered in her usual cheerful voice : " No, thank you, not now ; I should like my dinner first, and so would the children." And seeing the poet shocked by this gross material answer to his sublime proposition, she continued : " And look, the sea-breeze is coming in, and the mist is clearing away ; we ought to go back—they will be anxious about us, and Edward says this boat is not safe." " Safe !" said the poet ; " I'll go to Leghorn or anywhere in her." " You haven't yet written the words for the Indian air," Jane went on. " Yes, I have," he answered, " long ago. I must write them out again, for I can't read what I compose and write out of doors. You must play the air again, and I'll try and make the thing better."

In the meanwhile Shelley kept on rowing, and regained the shore without accident. Once again the demon of the deep, who watched his prey, had spread his wings and taken flight. Williams and Trelawney, both very anxious, waited for them on the shore. Jane jumped out so hurriedly that the punt and the poet capsized. Williams scolded her for this, telling her that if she had waited an instant he would have hauled up the boat. " No, thank you," she cried, still in excitement. " Oh, you do not know what a dreadful fate I have just escaped. Never will I put my foot in that horrid coffin ! Solve the great mystery ! Why, he is the greatest of all mysteries ! You can form some notion of what other people will do, as they partake of our common nature—not what he will do ! He is seeking after what we all avoid—death !" At dinner she ate nothing. " Ah ! never put me in a boat with Shelley alone !" she repeated. The poet, hearing his name, glided into the room, with his boyish face and radiant expression. He seized some bread and grapes, which he ate, while he read one of Calderon's dramas..

Another day there was some bustle in the house, as a distinguished stranger from Germany was coming to visit Shelley. The dinner was served without waiting for Shelley, and the stranger was telling them how the German students

of English literature considered Shelley as the most philosophical of poets, a writer of transcendent imagination, surpassing all our popular poets in depth of thought and refinement. One of the party remarked that genius purifies; the naked statues of the Greeks are modest, the draped ones of the moderns are not; when all at once the ladies hid their faces in their hands in mute despair before a most unexpected apparition. It was Shelley, in the costume of a marine god, dripping with sea-water, his hair full of seaweed. Quite unmoved, he calmly explained his adventure. While taking his customary sea-dip, his skittish skiff had played him one of her usual tricks by upsetting all his clothes in the water, and he could not get to his room without crossing the dining-room, which at that hour was always vacant. A few minutes later he reappeared with a book in his hand, and said triumphantly: "I have recovered this priceless gem from the wreck!" It was an *Æschylus*. He then took his place, unconscious of having done anything that could offend.

At the Casa Magni Shelley wrote even less than at Pisa; he gave an explanation of this to Smith, which is already known to us: "I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm; for I cannot hope with St. John, that 'the light came into the world, and the world knew it not.'" In his solitude, he was overcome from time to time by discouragement and melancholy; and although he had no intention of suicide, he wished to have the possibility of escape at hand. He asked Trelawney to procure prussic acid for him. "My wish was serious," he wrote on June 18th, "and sprang from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest."

These were, however, but passing moods occasioned by despair at the deafness of the world to truths he would fain reveal. Melancholy was banished by the charm of his circle of friends,

by Nature, by the sea, and by his boat, which dispersed these importunate clouds as by enchantment. On June 18th, he wrote to Gisborne:

You know my gross ideas of music, and will forgive me when I say that I listen the whole evening on our terrace to the simple melodies with excessive delight. I have a boat here; it cost me eighty pounds, and reduced me to some difficulty in point of money. However, it is swift and beautiful, and appears quite a vessel. Williams is captain, and we drive along this delightful bay in the evening wind, under the summer moon, until earth appears another world. Jane brings her guitar, and if the past and the future could be obliterated, the present would content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, "Remain thou, thou art so beautiful!" Claire is with us, and the death of her child* seems to have restored her to tranquillity. Her character is somewhat altered. She is vivacious and talkative, and, though she teases me sometimes, I like her. . . . Lord Byron, who is at Leghorn, has fitted up a splendid vessel—a small schooner on the American model—and Trelawney is to be captain. How long the fiery spirit of our pirate will accommodate itself to the caprice of the poet remains to be seen. . . .

I write little now. It is impossible to compose except under the strong excitement of an assurance of finding sympathy in what you write. Imagine Demosthenes reciting a philippic to the waves of the Atlantic. Lord Byron is in this respect fortunate. He touched the chord to which a million hearts responded, and the coarse music which he produced to please them, disciplined him to the perfection to which he now approaches. I do not go on with "Charles I." I feel too little certainty of the future, and too little satisfaction with regard to the past to undertake any subject seriously and deeply. I stand, as it were, upon a precipice, which I have ascended with great, and cannot descend without greater peril, and I am content if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment. . . . I have read several more of the plays of Calderon. *Los Dos Amantes del Cielo* is the finest, if I except one scene in the *Devocion de la Cruz*. I read Greek, and think about writing. I do not think much of——not admiring Metastasio; the *nil admirari*, however justly applied, seems to me a bad sign in a young person.

* The little Allegra had just died at the Capuchin convent of Bagnacavallo, in the Romagna, where Byron had placed her.

I had rather a pupil of mine had conceived a frantic passion for Marini himself, than that she had found out the critical defects of the most deficient author. When she becomes of her own accord full of genuine admiration for the finest scene in the "Purgatorio," or the opening of the "Paradiso," or some other neglected piece of excellence, hope great things.

There was but one subject besides literature that never failed to interest Shelley, viz. the triumph of truth and goodness in the world. As it was his first, so was it his last passion.

"It seems to me," he wrote to Horace Smith, "that things have now arrived at such a crisis as requires every man plainly to utter his sentiments on the inefficacy of the existing religions, no less than political systems, for restraining and guiding mankind. Let us see the truth, whatever that may be. The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded that he was born only to die; and if such should be the case, delusions, especially the gross and preposterous ones of the existing religion, can scarcely be supposed to exalt it. If every man said what he thought, it could not subsist a day. But all, more or less, subdue themselves to the element that surrounds them, and contribute to the evils they lament by the hypocrisy that springs from them. England appears to be in a desperate condition; Ireland still worse; and no class of those who subsist on the public labour will be persuaded that *their* claims on it must be diminished. But the Government must content itself with less in taxes, the landholder must submit to receive less rent, and the fundholder a diminished interest, or they will all get nothing, or something worse than nothing. I once thought to study these affairs, and write or act in them. I am glad that my good genius said '*refrain*.' I see little public virtue, and I foresee that the contest will be one of blood and gold; two elements which, however much to my taste in my pockets and my veins, I have an objection to out of them. . . . I still inhabit this divine bay, reading Spanish dramas, and sailing and listening to the most enchanting music. We have some friends on a visit to us, and my only regret is that the summer must ever pass, or that Mary has not the same predilection for this place that I have, which would induce me never to shift my quarters."

In this last letter we seem to have Shelley's last will, in a political and religious sense; his

thoughts may perhaps be more lucid, wider, purer and more elevated, but they are essentially the same as in "Queen Mab."

A curious parallel might be drawn between Shelley's first poem and his last, "The Triumph of Life." One is the embryo, the other is the full bloom of his genius.

He had passed from the inspiration of the eighteenth-century philosophers to that of Plato and Dante. The imitation of the "Divina Commedia," even in the rhythm (*rima terza*) is manifest. Virgil, "whose modesty led him to affect to copy others, though he created afresh all that he copied," was no longer the poet's guide in that marvellous vision; but in his place was a genius of later times, a prose-poet, who has also lifted part of the veil of Nature and Futurity—Rousseau. Struck by the strange pageantry of the mysterious chariot and the still more mysterious Shape it bore along, the poet asks its meaning, and a voice answers, "Life!" It is the voice of Rousseau, whom the poet recognises under the fantastic and Dantesque apparition of an old root growing with strange distortion out of the hill-side. Shelley has never mingled with more pathetic art the fantastic creations of his brain and the living realities around him, incorporated with his dream. The very form is Dantesque:

O Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness !
That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill-side,
Was, indeed, one of those deluded crew,
And that the grass which methought hung so wide,
And white, was but his thin, discoloured hair ;
And that the holes it vainly sought to hide
Were, or had been, eyes.

Then, passing in single file before the poet,
come Napoleon, Voltaire, Frederick, Catherine

and Leopold, Plato, Alexander, and his master Aristotle, Bacon; the flood of ages and of men, all the contrasts, all the contradictions, all the riddles of life. We can only guess what would have been Shelley's interpretation of those contradictions and riddles by the revelations of his other poems. The vision breaks off at that terrible inquiry which sums up all Shelley's doubts, quests, and aspirations: "*Then what is Life?*" Death soon solved his doubts by opening to him its infinite horizon of peace and immortality.

He seems to have had a distinct presentiment of approaching death when he penned the following poignant lines (1822):

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed;
When the lute is broken,
Sweet notes are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

Towards the end of June, 1822, Leigh Hunt, the long-expected friend and guest, at last arrived, accompanied by his wife and seven children. Through Shelley's care, apartments had been prepared for him in Byron's palace at Pisa. So soon as Shelley heard of his friend's arrival at Leghorn, he and Williams put to sea on board the *Ariel*, freshly done up, "to make the port of Leghorn in good style," as Shelley said. Leigh Hunt's eldest son, Thornton Hunt, describes, in his interesting Memoir,* the affectionate emotion with which the friends met again in Italy:

Some years elapsed between the night when I saw Shelley pack up his pistols—which he allowed me to ex-

* *The Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.

amine—for his departure for the South, and the moment when, after our own arrival in Italy, my attention was again called to his presence, by the shrill sound of his voice as he rushed into my father's arms, which he did with an impetuosity and fervour scarcely to be imagined by any one who did not know the intensity of his feelings, and the deep nature of his affection for that friend. I remember his crying out that he was "so *inexpressibly* delighted ! you cannot think how *inexpressibly* happy it makes me !"

He endeavoured, however, to express his happiness in a piece of verse, the last he ever wrote, which unfortunately has been lost. He accompanied the Hunts to Pisa, in order to see them comfortably settled in the Lanfranchi Palace, and to make final arrangements about *The Liberal*. Byron, meanwhile, had allowed himself to be persuaded by his English friends, Moore in particular, that the projected periodical would be prejudicial both to his fame and his interests; and it was against the grain that he prepared to join in a venture that seemed to Moore to court bankruptcy. Shelley, therefore, found him disinclined to fulfil his engagement, and was deeply disappointed. He was aware that Byron thought too slightly of Hunt's character as well as of his talents, for any lasting agreement between them; and as he had not forgiven him his treatment of Claire, neither could he forgive him now for not sharing his own generous feelings towards his friend.

A serious misunderstanding might have arisen between Byron and Shelley, had not the latter been bent on conciliation in the interests of Hunt himself.

But Shelley was acutely sensitive in all that regarded friendship, and his last days were saddened by these difficulties.

A deep melancholy pervades his last letters from Pisa and Leghorn; they seem to forebode

the final catastrophe. On July 4th he writes to Jane Williams from Pisa :

You will probably see Williams before I can disentangle myself from the affairs with which I am now surrounded. I return to Leghorn to-night, and shall urge him to sail with the first fair wind without expecting me. I have thus the pleasure of contributing to your happiness when deprived of every other, and of leaving you no other subject of regret, but the absence of one scarcely worth regretting. I fear you are solitary and melancholy at Villa Magni, and, in the intervals of the greater and more serious distress in which I am compelled to sympathise here, I figure to myself the countenance which has been the source of such consolation to me, shadowed by a veil of sorrow.

How soon those hours past, and how slowly they return, to pass so soon again, and perhaps for ever, in which we have lived together so intimately and happily ! Adieu, my dearest friend. I only write these lines for the pleasure of tracing what will meet your eyes. Mary will tell you all the news.

PISA, *July 4th*, 1822.

MY DEAREST MARY,

. . . Things are in the worst possible situation with respect to poor Hunt. I found Marianne in a desperate state of health, and on our arrival at Pisa, sent for Vaccà. He decides that her case is hopeless, and that although it will be lingering, must inevitably end fatally. . . . This intelligence has extinguished the last spark of poor Hunt's spirits, low enough before. . . . Lord Byron is at this moment on the point of leaving Tuscany. The Gambas have been exiled, and he declares his intention of following their fortunes. . . . Trelawney is here, without instructions, moody and disappointed. But it is the worst for poor Hunt, unless the present storm should blow over . . . he arrived here, with no other remnant of his £400 than a debt of sixty crowns. Lord Byron must of course furnish the requisite funds at present, as I cannot ; but he seems inclined to depart without the necessary explanations and arrangements due to such a situation as Hunt's . . . he offers him the copyright of the 'Vision of Judgment' for his first number. This offer, if sincere, is *more* than enough to set up the journal, and, if sincere, will set everything right.

How are you, my best Mary ? Write especially how is your health, and how your spirits are, and whether you are not more reconciled to staying at Lerici, at least during the

summer. You have no idea how I am hurried and occupied ;
I have not a moment's leisure, but will write by next post.

Ever, dearest Mary,

Yours affectionately,

S.

I have found the translation of the symposium.

Jane Williams replied to Shelley's melancholy note by one still more melancholy, in which, after expressing her anxiety at the continued absence of *Neddino* (her husband), she added in a post-script a question to which the event afterwards gave so tragic a reply : " Why do you say you may never enjoy such happy moments again? Are you going to join your friend Plato?"

On July 8th, Shelley and Williams decided on leaving Leghorn, and set sail for Lerici. We can have no better informed or more sympathetic narrator of the terrible catastrophe that followed than the widow of the poet.

" Having heard that Hunt had left Genoa," she writes a few days after the event (15th August) to Mrs. Gisborne, " Shelley, Edward, and Captain Roberts departed in our boat for Leghorn to receive him. I was then just better, had begun to crawl from my bedroom to the terrace ; but bad spirits succeeded to ill health, and this departure of Shelley's seemed to add insufferably to my misery. I could not endure that he should go. I called him back two or three times, and told him that if I did not see him soon I would go to Pisa with the child. I cried bitterly when he went away. They went, and Jane, Claire, and I remained alone with the children. I could not walk out, and though I gradually gathered strength, it was slowly, and my ill spirits increased. In my letters to him I entreated him to return—' the feeling that some misfortune would happen,' I said, ' haunted me.' I feared for the child ; for the idea of danger connected with him never struck me. When Jane and Claire took their evening walk, I used to patrol the terrace, oppressed with wretchedness, yet gazing on the most beautiful scene in the world. . . . I had a letter or two from Shelley mentioning the difficulties he had in establishing the Hunts, and that he was unable to fix the time of his return. Thus a week passed. On Monday, 8th, Jane had a letter from Edward, dated Saturday ; he said that he waited at Leghorn for Shelley,

who was at Pisa; that Shelley's return was certain; 'but,' he continued, 'if he should not come by Monday, I will come in a felucca, and you may expect me Tuesday evening at furthest.'

"This was Monday, the fatal Monday, but with us it was stormy all day, and we did not at all suppose that they could put to sea. At twelve at night we had a thunderstorm. Tuesday it rained all day, and was calm (the sky wept on their graves). On Wednesday the wind was fair from Leghorn, and in the evening several feluccas arrived thence. One brought word that they had sailed Monday, but we did not believe them. Thursday was another day of fair wind; and when twelve at night came, and we did not see the tall sails of the little boat double the promontory before us, we began to fear, not the truth, but some illness—some disagreeable news for their detention: Jane got so uneasy that she determined to proceed the next day to Leghorn in a boat to see what was the matter. Friday came, and with it a heavy sea and bad wind; Jane however, resolved to be rowed to Leghorn, since no boat could sail, and busied herself in preparations. I wished her to wait for letters, since Friday was letter-day. She would not, but the sea detained her; the swell rose so that no boat would venture out. At twelve at noon our letters came. There was one from Hunt to Shelley; it said, 'Pray write to tell us how you got home, for they say that you had bad weather after you sailed Monday, and we are anxious.' The paper fell from me; I trembled all over. Jane read it. 'Then it is all over!' she said. 'No, my dear Jane,' I cried 'it is not all over; but this suspense is dreadful! Come with me, we will go to Leghorn; we will post to be swift and learn our fate.' We crossed to Lerici, despair in our hearts. They raised our spirits there by telling us that no accident had been heard of, and that it must have been known, etc. But still our fear was great, and, without resting, we posted to Pisa. It must have been fearful to see us—two poor, wild, aghast creatures—driving (like Matilda) towards the sea to learn if we were to be for ever doomed to misery. I knew that Hunt was at Pisa at Lord Byron's house, but I thought that Lord Byron was at Leghorn. I settled that we should drive to Casa Lanfranchi, that I should get out and ask the fearful question of Hunt, 'Do you know anything of Shelley?' On entering Pisa the idea of seeing Hunt for the first time for four years under such circumstances, and asking him such a question, was so terrific to me that it was with difficulty that I prevented myself from going into convulsions—my struggles were dreadful. They knocked at the door, and some one called out '*chi è?*' It was the

Guiccioli's maid. Lord Byron was at Pisa; Hunt was in bed; so I was to see Lord Byron instead of him. This was a great relief to me; I staggered upstairs; the Guiccioli came to meet me smiling, while I could hardly say, 'Where is he—*Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?*' They knew nothing; he had left Pisa on Sunday; on Monday he had sailed; there had been bad weather Monday afternoon; more they knew not. Both Lord Byron and the lady have told me since that on that terrific evening I looked more like a ghost than a woman. Light seemed to emanate from my features; my face was very white; I looked like marble. Alas, I had risen almost from a bed of sickness for this journey. I had travelled all day; it was now twelve at night; and we, refusing to rest, proceeded to Leghorn; not in despair, no, for then we must have died, but with sufficient hope to keep up the agitation of the spirits which was all my life. It was past two in the morning when we arrived. They took us to the wrong inn. Neither Trelawney nor Captain Roberts was there, nor did we exactly know where they were, so we were obliged to wait until daylight. We threw ourselves dressed on our beds and slept a little, but at six o'clock we went to one or two inns to ask for one or the other of these gentlemen. We found Roberts at the 'Globe.' He came down to us with a face which seemed to tell us that the worst was true; and here we learned all that had occurred during the week they had been absent from us, and under what circumstances they had departed on their return. Shelley had passed most of the time at Pisa arranging the affairs of the Hunts and screwing Lord Byron's mind to the sticking-place about the journal. He had found this a difficult task at first, but at length he had succeeded to his heart's content with both points. Mrs. Mason said that she saw him in better health and spirits than she had ever known him, when he took leave of her Sunday, July 7th, his face burnt by the sun, and his heart light that he had succeeded in rendering the Hunts tolerably comfortable. Edward had remained at Leghorn. On Monday, July 8th, during the morning, they were employed in buying many things, eatables, etc., for our solitude. There had been a thunderstorm early, but about noon the weather was fine, and the wind right fair for Lerici. They were impatient to be gone. Roberts said, 'Stay until to-morrow, to see if the weather is settled'; and Shelley might have stayed, but Edward was in so great an anxiety to reach home—saying they would get there in seven hours with that wind—that they sailed, Shelley being in one of those extravagant fits of good spirits in which you have sometimes seen him. Roberts went out to the end of the mole, and

watched them out of sight. They sailed at one, and went off at the rate of about seven knots. About three, Roberts, who was still on the mole, saw wind coming from the gulf, or rather what the Italians call a *temporale*. Anxious to know how the boat would weather the storm, he got leave to go up the tower, and with the glass discovered them about ten miles out at sea, off Via Reggio; they were taking in their topsails. 'The haze of the storm,' he said, 'hid them from me, and I saw them no more. When the storm cleared I looked again, fancying that I should see them on their return to us; but there was no boat on the sea.' This, then, was all we knew; yet we did not despair. They might have been driven over to Corsica, and, not knowing the coast, have gone God knows where. Reports favoured this belief. It was even said that they had been seen in the Gulf. We resolved to return with all possible speed. We sent a courier to go from tower to tower along the coast to know if anything had been seen or found, and at 9 a.m. we quitted Leghorn, stopped but one moment at Pisa, and proceeded towards Lerici. When at two miles from Via Reggio, we rode down to that town to know if they knew anything. Here our calamity first began to break on us. A little boat and a water-cask had been found five miles off; they had manufactured a *piccolissima lancia* of thin planks, stitched by a shoemaker, just to let them run on shore without wetting themselves, as our boat drew four feet water. The description of that found tallied with this; but then this boat was very cumbersome, and in bad weather they might have been easily led to throw it overboard. The cask frightened me most, but the same reason might in some sort be given for that. I must tell you that Jane and I were not now alone. Trelawney accompanied us back to our home. We journeyed on, and reached the Magra about half-past 10 p.m. I cannot describe to you what I felt in the first moment when, fording this river, I felt the water splash about our wheels. I was suffocated, I gasped for breath; I thought I should have gone into convulsions, and I struggled violently that Jane might not perceive it. Looking down the river, I saw the two great lights burning at the *foce*. A voice from within me seemed to cry aloud, 'That is his grave!' After passing the river I gradually recovered. Arriving at Lerici, we were obliged to cross our little bay in a boat. San Arenzo was illuminated for a festa. What a scene! The waving sea, the sirocco wind, the lights of the town towards which we rowed, and our own desolate hearts, that coloured all with a shroud. We landed. Nothing had been heard of them. This was Saturday, July 13th. And thus we waited until Thursday,

July 25th, thrown about by hope and fear. We sent messengers along the coast towards Genoa, and to Via Reggio. Nothing had been found more than the *lancetta*; reports were brought to us—we hoped—and yet to tell you all the agony we endured during those twelve days, would be to make you conceive a universe of pain—each moment intolerable, and giving place to one still worse. The people of the country, too, added to one's discomfort. They are like wild savages; on festas the men and women and children in different bands—the sexes always separate—pass the whole night in dancing on the sands close to our door, running into the sea, then back again, and screaming all the time one perpetual air—the most detestable in the world; then the sirocco perpetually blew, and the sea for ever moaned their dirge. On Thursday, 25th, Trelawney left us to go to Leghorn, to see what was doing or what could be done. On Friday I was very ill, but as evening came on I said to Jane, 'If anything had been found on the coast, Trelawney would have returned to let us know. He has not returned, so I hope.' About seven o'clock p.m. he did return; all was over, all was quiet now, they had been found washed on shore. Well! all this was to be endured.

"Well, what more have I to say? The next day we returned to Pisa, and here we are still. Days pass away, one after another, and we live thus. We are all together; we shall quit Italy together. Jane must proceed to London; if letters do not alter my views I shall remain in Paris. Thus we live, seeing the Hunts now and then. Poor Hunt has suffered terribly, as you may guess. Lord Byron is very kind to me, and comes with the Guiccioli to see me often. To-day—this day—the sun shining in the sky—they are gone to the desolate sea-coast to perform the last offices to their earthly remains, Hunt, Lord Byron, and Trelawney. The quarantine laws would not permit us to remove them sooner, and now only on condition that we burn them to ashes. That I do not dislike. His rest shall be at Rome beside my child, where one day I also shall join them. 'Adonais' is not Keats's, it is his own elegy—he bids you there go to Rome—I have seen the spot where he now lies—the sticks that mark the spot where the sands cover him—he shall not be there, it is too near Via Reggio—they are now about this fearful office—and I live!"

The corpse of Shelley had been found on the coast near Via Reggio: the face and hands, and all parts of the body not protected by the clothing, were fleshless.

"The tall, slight figure," writes Trelawney, who was called to identify it, "the jacket, the volume of *Æschylus** in one pocket, and Keats's Poems in the other—doubled back as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away—were all too familiar to me to leave a doubt on my mind that this mutilated corpse was any other than Shelley's. The body of Williams, much more mutilated still, was found on the coast, three miles from that of Shelley. . . . Williams was the only one of the three who could swim, and it is probable he was the last survivor. . . . Shelley always declared that in case of wreck, he would vanish instantly, and not imperil valuable lives by permitting others to aid in saving his, which he looked upon as valueless. It was not until after three weeks after the wreck of the boat that a third body was found—four miles from the other two. This I concluded to be that of the sailor boy, Charles Vivian.

"I mounted my horse and rode to the Gulf of Spezzia, put up my horse, and walked until I caught sight of the lone house on the sea-shore in which Shelley and Williams had dwelt, and where their widows still lived. . . . As I stood on the threshold of their house, the bearer, or rather confirmer of news, which would rack every fibre of their quivering frames to the utmost, I paused, and looking at the sea, my memory reverted to our joyous parting only a few days before.

"The two families, then, had all been in the verandah, overhanging a sea so clear and calm that every star was reflected on the water as if it had been a mirror; the young mothers singing some merry tune, with the accompaniment of a guitar. Shelley's shrill laugh—I heard it still—rang in my ears, with Williams's friendly hail, the general 'buona notte' of all the joyous party, and the earnest entreaty to me to return as soon as possible, and not to forget the commissions they had severally given me. I was in a small boat beneath them, slowly rowing myself on board the 'Bolivar,' at anchor in the bay, loath to part from what I verily believed to have been at that time, the most united and happiest set of human beings in the whole world. And now by the blow of an idle puff of wind the scene was changed. Such is human happiness.

"My reverie was broken by a shriek from the nurse Caterina, as crossing the hall she saw me in the doorway. After asking her a few questions, I went up the stairs, and,

* Mr. Dowden, who has seen the volume at Boscombe Manor, where all the relics of Shelley are collected, by the filial piety of his son, asserts that it is a Sophocles.

unannounced, entered the room. I neither spoke, nor did they question me. Mrs. Shelley's large gray eyes were fixed on my face. I turned away. Unable to bear this horrid silence, with a convulsive effort she exclaimed, 'Is there no hope?' I did not answer, but left the room, and sent the servant with the children to them. The next day I prevailed on them to return with me to Pisa."

It was Trelawney, again, who undertook, in conformity with Tuscan law, to burn the bodies. He and Byron consulted together in order to render the cremation a solemn ceremony, recalling as far as possible the ceremonial of ancient times. A funeral oration alone was wanting. "We had lost," says Trelawney, "our Hellenic bard." The body of Edward Williams was burned on August 15th, and that of Shelley on the following day.

Byron assumed a somewhat theatrical and Hamlet-like demeanour on the occasion.

"When Byron," says Trelawney, "saw the shapeless mass of bones and flesh"—[all that now remained of Williams]—"Is that a human body?" he exclaimed. 'Why, it is more like the carcass of a sheep, or any other animal, than a man. This is a satire on our pride and folly.' I pointed to the letters E. E. W. on the black silk handkerchief. Byron, looking on, muttered 'The entrails of a worm hold together longer than the potter's clay of which man is made. Hold! let me see the jaw,' he added, as they were removing the skull; 'I can recognise any one by the teeth with whom I have talked. I always watch the lips and mouth; they tell what the tongue and eyes try to conceal. . . . Don't repeat this with me,' Byron said; 'let my carcass rot where it falls.'

"The next day Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the health officer as before. The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us so exactly harmonised with Shelley's genius that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraji, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines, glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight. As I thought of the delight Shelley felt in such scenes of loneliness and grandeur,

whilst living, I felt we were no better than a herd of wolves or a pack of wild dogs, in tearing out his battered and naked body from the pure yellow sand that lay so lightly over it, to drag him back to the light of day ; but the dead have no voice, nor had I power to check the sacrifice. The work went on silently in the deep and unresisting sand ; not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Even Byron was silent and thoughtful. We were startled and drawn together by a dull hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock ; the iron had struck a skull, and the body was soon uncovered. Lime had been strewn on it ; this, or decomposition, had the effect of staining it of a dark and ghastly indigo colour. Byron asked me to preserve the skull for him ; but remembering that he had formerly used one as a drinking-cup, I was determined Shelley's should not be so profaned. The limbs did not separate from the trunk, as in the case of Williams's body, so that the corpse was removed entire into the furnace. I have taken the precaution of having more and larger pieces of timber, in consequence of my experience of the day before of the difficulty of consuming a corpse in the open air with our apparatus. After the fire was well kindled we repeated the ceremony of the previous day, and more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. This, with the oil and salt, made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and the fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. The corpse fell open and the heart was laid bare. The frontal bone of the skull, where it had been struck with the mattock, fell off ; and as the back of the head rested on the red-hot bottom bars of the furnace the brains literally seethed, bubbled, and boiled, as in a cauldron, for a very long time.

"Byron could not face this scene ; he withdrew to the beach, and swam off to the *Bolívar*. Leigh Hunt remained in the carriage. The fire was so fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to gray ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones—the jaw and the skull—but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace my hand was severely burnt.

"After cooling the iron machine in the sea, I collected the human ashes and placed them in a box, which I took on board the *Bolívar*. Byron and Hunt retraced their steps to their home, and the officers and soldiers returned to their quarters."

Shelley's ashes were deposited by Trelawney in the English cemetery at Rome, near those of his little son William, and his brother poet John Keats. Leigh Hunt inscribed *cor cordium* on the stone, and Trelawney added the following lines from Ariel's song in the Tempest :

Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.

In the parish church of Christchurch, Hants, there is a monument of melancholy aspect, which recalls alike the image of Christ taken down from the cross and placed in His mother's arms, and that of a mournful, weeping Muse contemplating in silent sorrow the death-disfigured countenance of her dearest votary. This monument by Weeks, erected by filial piety in the shadow of a country church, to Shelley and Mary, awaits the hour when England shall atone for her ingratitude by placing it in Westminster Abbey by the side of the effigies of Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare.

APPENDIX.

FRAGMENT OF "ST. IRVYNE."

GINOTTI RELATES HIS HISTORY TO WOLFSTEIN.

"FROM my earliest youth, before it was quenched by complete satiation, *curiosity*, and a desire of unveiling the latent mysteries of Nature, was the passion by which all the other emotions of my mind were intellectually organised. This desire first led me to cultivate, and with success, the various branches of learning which led to the gates of wisdom. I then applied myself to the cultivation of philosophy, and the *éclat* with which I pursued it, exceeded my most sanguine expectations. *Love* I cared not for; and wondered why men perversely sought to ally themselves with weakness. Natural philosophy at last became the peculiar science to which I directed my eager inquiries; thence was I led into a train of labyrinthic meditations. I thought of *death*—I shuddered when I reflected, and shrank in horror from the idea, *selfish and self-interested* as I was, of entering a new existence to which I was a stranger. I must either dive into the recesses of futurity, or I must not, I cannot die.—'Will not this nature—will not the *matter* of which it is composed, exist to all eternity? Ah! I know it will; and, by the exertions of the energies with which Nature has gifted me, well I know it shall.' This was my opinion at that time: I then believed that there existed no God. Ah! at what an exorbitant price have I bought the conviction that there is one!!! Believing that priestcraft and superstition were all the

religion which *man* ever practised, it could not be supposed that I thought there existed supernatural beings of any kind. I believed *Nature* to be self-sufficient and excelling; I supposed not, therefore, that there could be anything beyond Nature.

"I was now about seventeen. I had dived into the depths of metaphysical calculations. With sophistical arguments had I convinced myself of the non-existence of a First Cause, and, by every combined modification of the essences of matter, had I apparently proved that no existences could possibly be, unseen by human vision. I had lived, hitherto, completely for myself; I cared not for others; and, had the hand of fate swept from the list of the living every one of my youthful associates, I should have remained immoved and fearless. I had not a friend in the world;—I cared for nothing but *self*. Being fond of calculating the effects of poison, I essayed one, which I had composed, upon a youth who had offended me; he lingered a month, and then expired in agonies the most terrific. It was returning from his funeral, which all the students of the college where I received my education (Salamanca) had attended, that a train of the strangest thought pressed upon my mind. I feared, more than ever, now to die; and although I had no right to form hopes or expectations for longer life than is allotted to the rest of mortals, yet did I think it were possible to protract existence. And why, reasoned I with myself, relapsing into melancholy, why am I to suppose that these muscles or fibres are made of stuff more durable than those of other men? I have no right to suppose otherwise than that, at the end of the time allotted by Nature for the existence of the atoms which compose my being, I must, like all other men, perish, perhaps everlastingly. Here in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed that Nature and chance which I believed in; and, in a paroxysmal frenzy of contending passions, cast myself, in desperation, at the foot of a lofty ash-tree, which reared its fantastic form over a torrent which dashed below.

"It was midnight; far had I wandered from Salamanca; the passions which agitated my brain, almost

to delirium, had added strength to my nerves and swiftness to my feet; but after many hours' incessant walking, I began to feel fatigued. No moon was up, nor did one star illumine the hemisphere. The sky was veiled by a thick covering of clouds; and, to my heated imagination, the winds, which in stern cadence swept along the night scene, whistled tidings of death and annihilation. I gazed on the torrent foaming beneath my feet; it could scarcely be distinguished through the thickness of the gloom, save at intervals, when the white-crested waves dashed at the base of the bank on which I stood. 'Twas then that I contemplated self-destruction; I had almost plunged into the tide of death, had rushed upon the unknown regions of eternity, when the soft sound of a bell from a neighbouring convent was wafted in the stillness of the night. It struck a chord in unison with my soul; it vibrated on the secret springs of rapture. I thought no more of suicide, but, reseating myself at the root of the ash-tree, burst into a flood of tears. Never had I wept before; the sensation was new to me; it was inexplicably pleasing. I reflected by what rules of science I could account for it; *there* philosophy failed me. I acknowledged its inefficacy, and, almost at *that* instant, allowed the existence of a superior and beneficent *Spirit*, in whose image is made the soul of man; but quickly chasing these ideas, and overcome by excessive and unwonted fatigue of mind and body, I laid my head upon a jutting projection of the tree, and, forgetful of everything around me, sank into a profound and quiet slumber. Quiet, did I say? No—it was not quiet. I dreamed that I stood on the brink of a most terrific precipice, far, far above the clouds, amid whose dark forms, which lowered beneath, was seen the dashing of a stupendous cataract; its roarings were borne to mine ear by the blast of night. Above me rose, fearfully embattled and rugged, fragments of enormous rocks, tinged by the dimly gleaming moon, their loftiness, the grandeur of their misshapen proportions, and their bulk, staggering the imagination; and scarcely could the mind itself scale the vast loftiness of their aerial summits. I saw the dark clouds pass by, borne by the impetuosity of the blast, yet felt no wind

myself. Methought darkly gleaming forms rode on their almost palpable prominences.

"Whilst thus I stood gazing on the expansive gulf which yawned before me, methought a silver sound stole on the quietude of night. The moon became as bright as polished silver, and each star sparkled with scintillations of inexpressible whiteness. Pleasing images stole imperceptibly upon my senses, when a ravishingly sweet strain of dulcet melody seemed to float around. Now it was wafted nearer, and now it died away in tones to melancholy dear. Whilst I thus stood enraptured, louder swelled the strain of seraphic harmony; it vibrated on my inmost soul, and a mysterious softness lulled each impetuous passion to repose. I gazed in eager anticipation of curiosity on the scene before me; for a mist of silver radiance rendered every object but myself imperceptible; yet was it brilliant as the noon-day sun. Suddenly, whilst yet the full strain swelled along the empyrean sky, the mist in one place seemed to dispart, and, through it, to roll clouds of deepest crimson. Above them, and seemingly reclining on the viewless air, was a form of most exact and superior symmetry. Rays of brilliancy surpassing expression fell from his burning eye, and the emanations from his countenance tinted the transparent clouds below with silver light. The phantasm advanced towards me; it seemed then, to my imagination, that his figure was borne on the sweet strain of music which filled the circumambient air. In a voice which was fascination itself, the being addressed me, saying: 'Wilt thou come with me? wilt thou be mine?' I felt a decided wish never to be his. 'No, no,' I unhesitatingly cried, with a feeling which no language can either explain or describe. No sooner had I uttered these words, than methought a sensation of deadly horror chilled my sickening frame; an earthquake rocked the precipice beneath my feet; the beautiful being vanished; clouds, as of chaos, rolled around, and from their dark masses flashed incessant meteors. I heard a deafening noise on every side; it appeared like the dissolution of Nature; the blood-red moon, whirled from her sphere, sank beneath the horizon. My neck was grasped firmly, and,

turning round in an agony of horror, I beheld a form more hideous than the imagination of man is capable of portraying, whose proportions, gigantic and deformed, were seemingly blackened by the inevasible traces of the thunderbolts of God ; yet in its hideous and detestable countenance, though seemingly far different, I thought I could recognise that of the lovely vision. ‘Wretch !’ it exclaimed, in a voice of exulting thunder, ‘saidst thou that thou wouldst not be mine? Ah ! thou art mine beyond redemption, and I triumph in the conviction that no power can ever make thee otherwise. Say, art thou willing to be mine?’ Saying this, he dragged me to the brink of the precipice ; the contemplation of approaching death frenzied my brain to the highest pitch of horror. ‘Yes, yes, I am thine,’ I exclaimed. No sooner had I pronounced these words, than the visionary scene vanished, and I awoke.”

LETTER TO GODWIN ON CLASSICAL EDUCATION.

“You know that in most points I agree with you. As I see you in ‘Political Justice,’ I agree with you. Your ‘Enquirer’ is replete with speculations in which I sympathise, yet the arguments there in favour of classical learning failed to remove all my doubts on that point. I am not sufficiently vain and dogmatical to say that *now* I have *no* doubts on the deleteriousness of classical education ; but it certainly is my opinion—nor has your last letter sufficed to refute it—that the evils of acquiring Greek and Latin considerably overbalance the benefit. But why, because I think so, should it even be supposed necessary by you to warn me against fearing that *you feel displeasure*? Assure yourself that the picture of you in the retina of my intellect is a standing proof to me, that its original is capable of extending to opinions the most unlimited toleration, and that he will scan with disgust nothing but a defect of the heart. Let Reason, then, be

arbitrer between us. Yet sometimes I am struck with dismay when I consider that, placed where you are, high up on the craggy mountain of knowledge, you will scarcely condescend to doubt, even sufficiently for the purposes of discussion, although by that doubting, you might fit me for following your footsteps. Yet I will explain my reasons for doubting the efficacy of classical learning, as a means of forwarding the interests of the human race.

“In the first place, I do not perceive how one of the truths of ‘Political Justice’ rests on the excellence of ancient literature. That Latin and Greek have contributed to form your character, it were idle to dispute, but in how great a degree have they contributed? Are not the reasonings on which your system is founded utterly distinct from and unconnected with the excellence of Greece and Rome? Was not the Government of republican Rome, and most of those of Greece, as oppressive and arbitrary, as liberal of encouragement to monopoly as that of Great Britain is at present? And what do we learn from their poets? As you have yourself acknowledged somewhere, ‘they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world.’ Lucretius forms perhaps the single exception. Throughout the whole of their literature runs a vein of thought similar to that which you have so justly censured in Helvetius. Honour—and the opinion either of contemporaries, or more frequently of posterity—is set so much above virtue as, according to the last words of Brutus, to make it nothing but an empty name. Their politics sprang from the same narrow and corrupted source. Witness the interminable aggressions between each other of the states of Greece; the thirst of conquest with which even republican Rome desolated the earth;—they are our masters in politics, because we are so immoral as to prefer self-interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good. You say that words will neither debase our understandings, nor distort our moral feelings. You say that the time of youth could not be better employed than in the acquisition of classical learning. But *words* are the very things which so eminently contribute to the growth and establishment of prejudice; the learning

of *words* before the mind is capable of attaching corresponding ideas to them, is like possessing machinery with the use of which we are so unacquainted as to be in danger of misusing it. But words are merely signs of ideas. How many evils, and how great evils, spring from annexing inadequate and improper ideas to words! The words honour, virtue, duty, goodness, are examples of this remark. Besides, we only want one distinct sign for one idea. Do you not think that there is much more danger of our wanting ideas for the signs of them already made, than of our wanting these signs for inexpressible ideas? I should think that natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and above all history, could be sufficient employments for immaturity; employments which would completely fill up the era of tutelage, and render unnecessary all expedients for losing time well, by gaining it safely.

“Of the Latin language as a grammar I think highly. It is a key to the European languages, and we can hardly be said to know our own without first attaining a complete knowledge of it. Still I cannot help considering it as an affair of minor importance, inasmuch as the science of things is superior to the science of words. Nor can I help considering the vindicators of ancient learning—I except you, not from politeness, but because you, unlike them, are willing to subject your opinions to reason—as the vindicators of a literary despotism; as the tracers of a circle which is intended to shut out from real knowledge, and to which this fictitious knowledge is attached, all who will not support the established systems of politics, religion, and morals. I have as great a contempt for Cobbett as you can have, but it is because he is a dastard and a time-server; he has no humanity, no refinement; but were he a classical scholar, would he have more? Did Greek and Roman literature refine the soul of Johnson? Does it extend the views of the thousand narrow bigots educated in the very bosom of classicality? But

‘. . . in publica commoda peccem
Si longo sermone morer tua tempora,’

says Horace at the commencement of his longest letter.”

LAST SCENE OF THE FIRST ACT OF "THE
HAIR OF ABSALOM," BY CALDERON.

AMON—TAMAR.

*Musicians singing behind the scenes.**Tamar.* Eat, Amon, while they sing.*Amon.* I would sooner listen.*Amon and Musicians.* He loveth not, who speaketh not.*Amon.* Be not surprised, divine Tamar, at my boldness, if to-day I violate the laws of modesty and reverence. May this white hand, without changing the lilies into asps, serve as antidote to my poison.*Tamar.* Let go my hand, Amon; it is wrong now to find fault with a mistake.**Amon.* Were it a mistake, thou wouldst be right, but it is time for my passion to break the chain of my misery.*Amon and Musicians.* For he loveth not, who speaketh not.*Amon.* I am dying for thee, Tamar. My confidence has killed me.*Tamar (aside).* Who could have foreseen this?
(*Aloud*). Consider, Amon.*Amon.* I will consider nothing.*Tamar.* I am thy sister.*Amon.* True. But if, as the proverb says, "Blood boils without fire," what will blood and fire be together?*Tamar.* Our law allows marriage between kindred. Ask my father for me.*Amon.* It is late to try persuasion.*Tamar (calling).* Hither! [*A Musician enters.**Amon.* Tamar wishes you to sing.*Tamar.* I?

* An allusion to a preceding scene, in which Tamar had consented to act as an imaginary lover, to soothe her brother's distress.

The Musician. We obey. [Exit.

[Singing behind the scenes.

Amon. I must possess thee.—Jonadab, shut the doors at once.

Jonadab (from without). The doors are shut.

Tamar. Think of the risk.

Amon. I fear it not.

Tamar. Father! Lord! Absalom!

Amon. Thysweet harmonious voice is powerless now.

Tamar. Then I will call on Heaven.

Amon. Heaven is slow to answer.

Tamar. Then shall this weapon kill thee. (*She snatches his sword and flies.*) Pursue me not, I have both strength and courage.

Amon. Thou hast wounded me now with my sword, and though this be an omen, I fear nothing. Having spoken, I must needs go on, for assuredly . . .

Amon and Musicians. He loveth not, who speaketh not.

THE END.

